TO THE MEMORY OF

A. M S

WHO GAVE HER SON HIS
FIRST INSPIRATION
ON THE
WAY OF LIFE

INTRODUCTION

SUPERNATURALISM in religion is that affirmation of the eternal, and of the necessity of a concretely real relationship to the eternal, without which all human life tends to become confused and distorted, sinking into triviality and pointlessness, as being defrauded of its highest potentiality. It is an affirmation that life is a gift as well as a task; it is the recognition that each developing phase of that gift is the starting point for a task, and that each essential task involves the consciousness of a gift as its impetus and condition. Such a religiosity is a concrete synthesis of receptivity and activity, expressed in terms of the human life of a self that knows itself as derivative, not original or self-posited.

The God-idea of this religiosity is personal as a matter of course, no other type of concept could possibly meet its needs or correspond to its nature The personality-category not only exhibits the highest type of value that experience affords, the person, ethically determined, is, in the last analysis, the only abiding value This religiosity originates and culminates in an idealizing personal relationship, its faith is a concrete personal attitude, having for its object a concrete personal attitude God is thus a person, His will is the everlasting distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness, good and evil, it is goodness and love Love and righteousness do not attach to impersonal things or essences; the idea of good is not good Anything less than a personal life-attitude is for a human being something abstract; religion is concrete, expressing in the most concrete manner pos-

sible man's personal situation in existence. No man who approaches the God-idea from any other standpoint than from the standpoint of his own moral imperfection will ever have occasion to know the height and breadth and depth of the love of God, which passeth all human understanding.

DAVID F SWENSON

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. What It Means to Seek God . . . 1
On the Occasion of a Confessional Service

II. Love Conquers All . . . 43
On the Occasion of a Wedding

III. The Decisiveness of Death . . 75
At the Side of a Grave

THREE DISCOURSES ON IMAGINED OCCASIONS

By

Søren Kierkegaard

COPENHAGEN
1845

DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY OF

MY DECEASED FATHER

MICHAEL PEDERSEN KIERKEGAARD

PREFACE

THIS little book, which might be called a book of occasional addresses, although it has neither the occasion which creates the speaker and gives him authority, nor the occasion which creates the hearer and makes him a learner, is lacking in the legitimation of a call, and is thus in its shortcomings without excuse. It is without assistance from external circumstances, and thus quite helpless in its elaboration. And yet it is not without hope, and above all not without confidence. It seeks the individual whom in a spirit of gratitude and joy I call *my* reader, or rather, it does not even seek him. Knowing neither the hour nor the season, it waits quietly for the right reader to come, like a bridegroom bringing the occasion with him. Each of us makes his own contribution, the reader contributing most. The significance of the book lies in its appropriation; hence its glad dedication. Here there is no worldly mine or thine, divisively forbidding the appropriation of that which belongs to a neighbor. Admiration is to some extent envy, and therefore a misunderstanding; criticism is in all its justification to some degree opposition, and therefore a misunderstanding; the recognition in the mirror is but a fleeting acquaintanceship, and therefore a misunderstanding. But to look with care, and have the will not to forget what the mirror in its impotence cannot accomplish, that is appropriation; and such an appropriation is the still greater, the victorious devotion of the reader.

S. K.

WHAT IT MEANS TO SEEK GOD

(ON THE OCCASION OF A CONFESSIONAL SERVICE)

FATHER in heaven! We know indeed that seeking is never without its promise, how then could we fail to seek Thee, the author of all promises, and the giver of all good gifts! We know well that the seeker does not always have to wander far afield, since the more sacred the object of his search the nearer it is to him; and if he seeks Thee, O God, Thou art of all things most near! But we know also that that seeking is never without its pains and its temptation, how then would there not be fear in seeking Thee, who art mighty! Even he who trusts in thought to his kinship with Thee, does not venture forth without fear upon those crucial decisions of thought, where through doubt he seeks to trace Thy presence in the wise order of existence, or through despair he seeks to trace Thee in the obedience under providence of rebellious events. He, whom Thou dost call Thy friend, who walks in the light of Thy countenance, he, too, not without trembling, seeks the meeting of friendship with Thee, who alone art mighty. The man of prayer who loves with his whole heart—it is not without anxiety that he ventures into the conflict of prayer with his God. The dying man, for whom Thou dost shift the scene, does not relinquish the temporal without a shudder when Thou dost call him. Not even the child of woe, for whom the world has nothing but suffering, flees to Thee without fear, Thou who dost not merely alleviate,

but art all in all! How then should the sinner dare to seek Thee, O God of righteousness! But therefore he seeks Thee, not as these others do, but he seeks Thee in the confession of sins.

And there is a place for that purpose, my reader, you know where. And there is the occasion, you know how it may be seized. And there is the moment which cries: yet today. How still! For in the house of God there is peace, but in the innermost sanctuary there is an enclosure. Whoever goes there seeks the stillness, whoever sits there is enveloped in stillness, even if a voice is heard, the stillness only grows. How still! There is no fellowship, everyone is by himself. There is no call to a united endeavor, everyone is summoned to a separate accounting. There is no invitation to a common life, everyone is alone. For whoever is intent upon confession is solitary, aye, as solitary as one who is dying. Whether there are many standing about the dying man's bed who were near and precious to him and who love him, or he lies there abandoned by the world because he deserted the world, or the world deserted him: the dying man is alone, his struggle is solitary and his thought roves far afield, so that thousands could not hold it back, nor tens of thousands, if the solitary man does not know the consolation. Whether thousands waited longingly for him who sought the stillness in confession, or whether he who goes away, is a poor and wretched man, whom no one waits for and no one cares about: this difference is but a jest. The truth, the earnest truth is: they were both alone. Not all the number of his friends, not the glories of the world, nor the far-flung significance of his achievements can help the strong man, except perhaps to disturb the still-

ness, which would be the greatest conceivable injury; and it cannot harm the wretched man to be forsaken, if it helps him to find the stillness.

It is hard for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, and it is difficult for a worldly man to find stillness, be he powerful or humble. It is hard to find the stillness amid the alarums of life, difficult to find it even where it is, even if one does not bring the alarums with him. How still and how serious! And yet there is no one who accuses, who would dare to accuse, where everyone is guilty! And there is no one who condemns, who would dare to condemn, where everyone is intent upon his own accounting. No one accuses except the thoughts, no one condemns except that One who sees in secret and hears confession in secret. Aye, even when a voice is heard, it is you yourself speaking with yourself through the speaker's words; precisely how you interpret them, the speaker does not know, that is known only to yourself. Even if it were your best friend, he cannot know it as you know it. And if you do not hear the discourse in this manner, then you do not hear it rightly, the speaker's voice becomes only a noise, and your attention becomes a diversion which violates the stillness.

Whoever fears this stillness, let him avoid it, but he dare not deny that it exists, since he fears it. Whoever says he sought the stillness but could not find it, is an envious deceiver who would disturb others. For otherwise he would be silent and grieve over it, or he would say: "I did not seek it aright, and therefore I did not find it." For there is nothing, nothing in all the world, neither an earthquake that shook the pillars of the church, nor the most preposterous speech of the most

worthless man, nor the most loathsome hypocrisy of the basest, that can take it from you, but things of far less importance may indeed afford opportunity to one who seeks an excuse. No, nothing can take the stillness from you except yourself, even as all the world's power and wisdom and the combined efforts of all mankind cannot give it to you; nor can you yourself either take it or give it away. It is not to be had for nothing, but neither is it to be bought for gold. It cannot be seized by violence, but neither does it come as a dream while you sleep. It does not bargain with you about the condition, even if you proposed to benefit all mankind. If you give everything you possess you have not thereby gained it; but if you have gained it, you may well possess everything as one who possesses nothing.

Whoever says this stillness does not exist is only a noise-maker, for have you ever heard from one who came to an agreement with himself in stillness, that there is no stillness? You may indeed have heard pretentious words and vociferous speech and noisy bustle, all directed toward getting rid of this stillness, and instead of conscience and stillness and God's voice of judgment in solitude, you may have got a natural echo from the crowd, a confused common outcry, a general opinion, which a man in cowardice fears to hold by himself alone. But you, my reader, if you fear this stillness, although endeavoring to have a conscience (for without stillness, conscience cannot exist), and to have a good conscience, do you nevertheless endure, and go on to the end; for this stillness is not the stillness of death in which a man perishes, this sickness is not unto death, it is the transition to life.

Whoever participates in the confessional service, seeks

God in the confession of sins. And the confessional is the way, and on the way that leads to salvation it is a place of prayer, where there is pause, where sober reflection brings concentration of mind, and the accounting is made up. And ought not the accounting to be truthfully and rightfully made, without guile? Then the stillness comes, then will everyone's mouth be stopped, then each one becomes guilty, and cannot answer one to a thousand. With the help of what disturbs the stillness, one becomes less guilty, perhaps even righteous. A sorry righteousness! For you do not act unjustly if you forgive another human being for his sake who asks it, for God's sake who requires it, for your own sake lest you be perturbed in spirit. You are not venal if you heed the impulse of reconciliation in your own breast. You do not retard yourself upon the way, if, though you are the injured party, you seek to be reconciled with your adversary while he is still in the way. Neither do you defraud God of what belongs to Him if you sell forgiveness for nothing. You do not waste your time nor use it ill if you meditate on what may serve to excuse him; and you are not deceived if, finding no excuse, you nevertheless believe, through the sacred deception of love (which transforms all the world's mockery of your weakness into heavenly joy over your victory), that the wrong must after all be excusable.—But when it is your own accounting, you would do wrong to forgive yourself even the least fault, for worse than the blackest fault is a self-made righteousness. You would indeed be venal if you heeded the impulses of frivolity or guile in your own case; you would indeed delay yourself upon the way and dampen the ardor of your spirit, wasting your time and using it

ill in finding excuses for yourself; aye, you would be deceived by the deceit of presumption, precisely when you found the excuse.

Ah, it is a strange transition for the spirit to undergo, a dizzying shifting of scenes. A moment ago this man moved about clothed in riches and power, and now in a moment, although nothing has happened in the meantime, he cannot answer one to a thousand. For who is the rich and powerful within the present meaning of our discourse, who other than the injured, the oppressed, the wronged, the violated! It is possible that the man of violence who treads upon the oppressed, it is possible that the man of power whose way through life was marked by injuries inflicted, that the rich man whose wealth was increased through widows' tears, that the desperate man who mocks and injures others—it is possible that they all cared little about forgiveness. But, verily, no king who rules over empires and countries, no child of gold, who has everything, no breadwinner who provides for the hungry, has anything so important, or so precious to bestow, or so needful to grant, as the man whose forgiveness is needed by another human being. For he does indeed need it, aye, as the prime necessity of life; if there is anyone who does not think so, his need is nevertheless quite as real—and it is the wronged individual who is richest. A pagan whose name is inseparably associated with conquest and power, has said of his enemy, when the latter showed, as it seemed to pagans, the highest courage by taking his own life: "There he deprived me of my most glorious victory, for I would have forgiven him." And another has said: "I will not ask for forgiveness because I love deeply. The injury I inflicted was not perhaps so great, and the request for forgiveness may have been

reasonable—but when forgiveness is not obtained, the wrong becomes infinite, and the power to grant it or withhold it becomes an infinitely superior force over against me."

Thus it was the innocent sufferer who was rich. A moment ago in a worldly environment, he could say: "Do but wrong me, you are yourselves the losers because you need my forgiveness"—and now a moment later, the stillness envelops him and he does not know what he has to forgive, and the accounting reveals that he cannot answer one to a thousand. For such is the accounting if there is stillness about him, that is, if he does not bring the disturbing elements with him. The account of him who committed the wrong and the account of him who was the purest of all, are the same, just as these are the same with the one who innocently suffered wrong. Possibly, therefore, some fear this stillness and its power, and the infinite nothingness wherein all differences are submerged, even the difference between wrong and its forgiveness, and the depth into which the solitary individual sinks in the stillness. It is as when one who renounces the world shudders at the emptiness which appears around him But a moment ago, he wished for so much, he yearned and struggled, and slept uneasily at night, and asked for news about others, and envied some, and ignored some, and was humble in the right place, and alert in friendship and enmity, and forecast the weather, and understood the wind, and changed his plans, and strove anew, and won and lost, and did not weary, and looked for the reward, and glimpsed the gain — and now, poor defrauded soul! For if in this renunciation he did not find the one thing needful, he is a poor deluded man who cheated himself, a poor man, who by

his own act became the victim of life's mockery. For now perhaps the great prize he had desired came to him; now he was rich, now, now, O despair, why just now, why not yesterday, instead of now when he no longer quite desires it, but yet does not quite renounce it! And so it is with everyone who has learned that there is a stillness in which every man becomes guilty, but has learned it only to fear it. Perhaps he was looked upon as righteous in the eyes of men, and this was his desire; perhaps he had been wronged but was obstinately proud of having the power of forgiveness; perhaps he was not entirely without guilt, but had been found acceptable in the eyes of the world —alas, poor defrauded man! How embittered he must be against whoever had led him to this stillness, and had thus misled him! But no one can do this for another, and hence his wrath is impotent. Poor defrauded man! If the crown of civic righteousness he had coveted were now to be handed him by the crowd, if thousands confirmed this judgment, calling him the just man of the nation, and this had been the vain desire of his proud ears: why now, now when his ears were not indeed wholly deaf to this cry, but when he had not yet wholly understood the infinite secret of the stillness! Poor defrauded man! If now the wrong-doer came to his door; and this was the moment to sell his forgiveness dear, the moment of triumph he had looked forward to, why now, why not yesterday, but now, now, when he experienced no pleasure in the passion of pride and revenge, but had not quite comprehended the grave significance of his own guilt! For whoever acquires this understanding is certainly not deceived. Blessed is the man who understands it.

And if it is the duty of any man to preach, to teach others about their guilt, to teach what this unauthorita-

tive discourse cannot do, he will at least have the consolation of knowing that precisely the purest of heart will be the most willing to apprehend his own guilt most profoundly. For when a man undertakes this greatest of all ventures, himself guilty to bring all to the consciousness of guilt, where the thought of even the bravest halts; when he does not fear to include himself, but his thought hesitates at the vision of what is, humanly speaking, pure and lovable, the beautiful purity of youthful womanhood, innocent of the world and of worldly impulses, in all sincerity thinking humbly of itself: there will he, if his task requires him to proclaim sin as the common lot of the race, find an understanding which will perhaps put him to shame.

The penitent seeks God in the confession of sins. And the confessional is the way, and on the way of salvation, it is a place of prayer, where there is pause, where reflection concentrates the mind. Let us then pause, and on the occasion of confession, speak on the theme:

WHAT IT MEANS TO SEEK GOD,

more closely defining it by considering that *no man can see God without purity,* and that *no man can know God without becoming a sinner.* If anyone feels himself improperly delayed by the task, then let him lay the discourse aside, lest the swifter runner be delayed by the slower. The value of a meditation is always doubtful; sometimes it may help one to a decision, sometimes it may prove a hindrance; just as a little preliminary run may help to decide the jump, but a run of several miles would probably prevent it. If there is someone who has frequently come to a standstill in life yet without finding

the stillness, if he has sought it where it is and yet not really found it, and has blamed himself for the failure; if he has fought and still not won, then let him try again, let him follow the thought of the discourse, but freely and without compulsion. There is nothing to bind him, no obligation. No reproof awaits him if he does not succeed, for the discourse has no authority.

But he cannot wish that the discourse should say that the stillness exists in the sacred place in such a way that if one could remain there and not again have to go out into the confusion of life, then one would always have the stillness with him. For anyone who requires this, demands too much of the discourse, namely, that it should deceive him since it is not the place, in the external sense, which is decisive, as if the same thing would not happen to him there as happens in the world, if he should remain in the sacred place, as if he would not then first and foremost be terrified at having found comfort in the illusion that it was the place that matters.

A poet has indeed said that a sigh without words ascending Godward, is the best prayer, and so one might also believe that the rarest of visits to the sacred place, when one comes from afar, is the best worship, because both help to create an illusion. A sigh without words is the best prayer when the thought of God only sheds a faint glow over existence, like the blue mountains far distant on the horizon; when the lack of clarity in the soul is satisfied by the greatest possible ambiguity in the thought. But if God is present in the soul, then the sigh will find the thought and the thought will find the word —but also the difficulty, which is not dreamed of when God is at a distance. In our day we hear it proclaimed, to

the verge of nonsense, that the highest task is not in living in the stillness, where there is no danger—to the verge of foolishness, because the danger exists there quite as much as in the confusion of life, and the great thing, in short, is neither to live in solitude nor amidst the confusion, but the great thing is to overcome the danger. And the most mediocre thing is to work oneself weary in considering which is the most difficult, such labor is useless trouble and has no relevance, like the laborer himself who is neither in the solitude nor the confusion, but in the busy absent-mindedness of reflection.

Finally if anyone, because of his busy life and its many activities, thinks that he has not the time to read such a discourse, he may be quite justified in thinking he has not the time to read this particular discourse, which therefore willingly waits to the last for attention. But if he means that he has no time at all to concern himself about that with which the address is concerned—namely, this stillness, then the address, even if the busy man found an hour free from his many engagements for the setting forth of a hasty objection, the discourse will not make itself ridiculous by answering it. The many engagements are perhaps a doubtful merit, perhaps they might become fewer by thinking about this stillness, and the many affairs might seem particularly to be the one reason for more frequently seeking the stillness of the accounting, where the reckoning is not indeed in dollars and cents, nor in marks of distinction and abasement, nor in any other imaginary magnitudes.

If the seeker seeks that which lies outside him, something external, something not in his own power, then the thing he seeks is in some definite place. If he can

only find the place, then he is helped, then he seizes it, and his search is ended. Thus everyone once knew in his early youth that there were many beautiful things in the world, but he did not know exactly where they were. Alas, if many have forgotten this childish wisdom, I wonder if in truth they have all become wiser, even he who, instead of this beautiful wholeness, has gained the duplicity of doubt and a vacillating resolution!

If the seeker after stillness assumes that he can do nothing toward finding the place, then he is only wishing. And such was the case with everyone in his early youth. Ah, if many have changed, I wonder if everyone has in truth changed for the better, even he who exchanged the precarious wealth of the wish for the certain wretchedness of mediocrity!

When the wishing individual sees his wish fulfilled, then he wonders, just as he had already wondered at having the wish. So once was everyone in his early youth; not as we unjustly say about youth, good only for being lured into foolish enterprises, but thoroughly good for enlisting in the happy and unreserved dedication of the mind to wonder, that honest requital which the wishing individual faithfully preserves for the moment of fulfillment. Alas, if many have lost this readiness to give like for like, just as they have learned to think disparagingly of the wish, is therefore this higgling honesty, which neither rightly wishes nor rightly wonders, nor gives like for like—is this honesty therefore a gain?

He who wishes also seeks, but his seeking is in the dark, not so much with respect to the wish, as with respect to whether he comes nearer to it or moves farther away.

Among the many good things of life, there is one which

is highest, which is not determined by its relation to the others, because it is the highest (although the one who wishes lacks a precise conception of it because it is the highest, precisely as being unknown)—and this good is God. The other goods have names and marks of identification, but where the wish draws its deepest breath, where this unknown good shows itself, there wonder is present, and wonder is the sense of the immediate consciousness for God, and the beginning of all deeper understanding. The seeking of the wishing individual is blind not so much with respect to the object, for this is the unknown, as with respect to whether he comes nearer or moves farther away—now he is startled, and the expression for his wonder is worship. And wonder is an ambiguous state of the soul, containing both fear and bliss. The worship is therefore mingled fear and happiness. Even the most purified and rational worship of God is happiness in fear and trembling, confidence in deadly peril, frankness in the consciousness of sin. Even the most purified and rational worship of God shares the infirmity of wonder, and it is not the simple magnitude of power and wisdom and deed which determines the magnitude of the God-relationship, but the mightiest is he who is most profoundly powerless, the saintliest sighs from the deepest need, the strongest is he who rightly folds his hands.

This state of wonder in the one who wishes corresponds to the unknown, and is thus wholly indeterminable, or rather infinitely determinable, and may be as abhorrent as ludicrous, may be as confused as it is childish. When the forest darkens in the evening hour and the moon loses itself among the trees, when the natural magic of

the forest seizes its prey, and the pagan suddenly sees a wonder, a miracle of phosphorescence that mystifies him, then he sees the unknown, and expresses his wonder in worship. When the gnarled tree-trunk creates the illusion of a figure unfamiliar to him, resembling a human being, and yet, to his surprise, resembling it only in supernatural proportions, then he pauses and worships. When he sees a track in the desert which no man has made, nor any creature known to him, when the power of solitude impregnates his soul with wonder, then he sees by this sign that the unknown has been here, and he worships. When the sea lies deep and still, inexplicable, when the wondering mind gazes dizzily down into its depths until the unknown seems rising up to meet it, when the breakers roll monotonously over the beach, overwhelming the soul with the power of the monotonous, when the rushes whisper in the wind and again whisper, and therefore must wish to confide something to the listener—then he worships.

If the passion of wonder defines itself, its highest expression is that God is the inexplicable whole of existence, as sensed by the imagination in the least and the greatest everywhere. That which was once the content of the pagan consciousness returns again and again in each generation, and not until it has been lived through and set aside does that which was once idolatry become reduced to a carefree state of existence in the innocence of poesy. For idolatry purified becomes the poetic.

If the wishing individual is supposed to be able to contribute something toward finding what he seeks, then his attitude is one of striving. Now the wonder and the wish are about to undergo a test. Often deceived as to the extent of the wonder, just because it stood in an immediate

relation to the unknown, it was as abhorrent as it was ridiculous, as confused as it was childish; often deceived, the wonder will now look before it and no longer go blindly. The immediate relationship is thus instantly broken, although the breach is not yet a complete rupture. The breach consists in the way being interposed as a determination, while for the wishing individual there is no way. When the seeker no longer seeks blindly, then he no longer merely wishes, he strives, for striving is exactly the way to the thing sought. And everyone was like this in his early youth, ambitious of purpose; ah, if many have learned to cling to earth, does it follow that they have all therefore also become wiser, even he who, instead of the free flight of birds, gained the crouching movement of the four-footed beasts? Recklessly daring in bold adventure was everyone once in his early youth; ah, if many left this behind, I wonder if they therefore became wiser, even he, who instead of dashing recklessly into the unknown, gained the security of a pedestrian on the highway of mediocrity. Boldly challenging was everyone once in his early youth, ah, if many have learned to tone down their demands, does it follow that they have all become wiser—even he who became surfeited by the favors of fortune, or that one who was trivialized by his environment, or the one who learned contentment in the bondage of habit? Oh, it is certainly well not to speak about fortune if one knows something holier to mention, but if not, it was indeed a misfortune when fortune vanished from life, when it became weary of giving and taking, weary of men who defrauded it of the wonder.

But in the world of freedom where all endeavor has its origin, and wherein all striving has its life, there wonder

appears upon the way. The human striving has a different name, but that which is directed toward the unknown, is directed toward God. To say that it is directed toward the unknown is to say that it is infinite. When the striving individual pauses, he sees the illusive trace of an enormous being which is when it has been, which is and yet is not. This being is fate, and his striving seems like a going astray. Worship is again the expression of wonder, and its scope embraces the abhorrent as well as the ludicrous, the confused as well as the childish.

If the seeker is supposed to be able to do everything to find the thing sought, then is the enchantment over, the wonder is forgotten, there is nothing left to wonder about. And then in the next moment the thing sought is nothing, and that is why he was able to do everything himself. So was everyone once in the springtime of youth, then he became an eternity old. Ah, if many console themselves at not having experienced this terror, I wonder if they have all therefore become wiser, even that one also who was still a youth in his old age. It happened once to every man when he took leave of his youth, that life stood still and he perished; and if many boast of their youthfulness, I wonder if he is therefore wiser who defrauds the years and eternity of their rightful claims, whose highest wisdom is a frivolous answer to an earnest question.

There was a time when man, weary of wonder, weary of striving, turned away from externals, and found that there was no object of wonder, that the unknown was nothing, and wonder a deception. And what was once the content of life returns in each successive generation. If anyone would appear wise by saying that these are ghosts

of the past, left behind us centuries ago: in life this is not so. Nor could you wish, my hearer, that I should help you waste your time in describing great events, mentioning curious names, and becoming dully self-important in the contemplation of mankind. Ah, no, if it is true that he is defrauded who gets only a little knowledge, I wonder if he is not also defrauded who acquires so much that he can assimilate nothing at all! Man progresses slowly, even the most glorious knowledge is merely a presupposition. If we increase the presuppositions more and more, we are like the miser who heaps up money for which he has no use. What is it worth at the most? Even a happy upbringing is only a presupposition, and time passes before it is appropriated, and a whole lifetime is not too much for its appropriation. Oh, if he was defrauded whose early training was neglected, I wonder if he, too, was not defrauded who was ignorant of its being a presupposition, a treasure entrusted to him, a sacred heritage to be acquired, and who without further ado, takes himself to be that which he has the name of being.

If even the better ones among us have sometimes sighed because the thing sought was so far away, you must also have observed, my reader, that there is also another difficulty, that there is an illusory knowledge that beguiles the soul, a security in knowledge possessed which also deceives, a remoteness from all decision where one may be lost without even dreaming of such a possibility. Let the terrible in life take its prey, oh, this illusory security is a more terrible monster! Supposing one starves in destitution and want, is it better to perish from surfeiting?

It was terrible when wonder deserted man and he de spaired of himself, but it was just as terrible that one

should know all this, know even far more, and yet not have experienced it, and most terrible of all that one should have known everything, and not have begun to do the least. And if it should be so with me, O, let me begin over again. Return, O youth, with your wishes and your lovable wonder; return, O youthful striving, with your reckless daring and your shudder before the unknown; seize me, O despair, who breaks both with wonder and the wonder of youth! But quickly, quickly, if it be possible! And if I have wasted my best time without experiencing anything, teach me at least, not to become indifferent, not to seek consolation with others in a common destruction, so may the terror over the loss be the beginning of my healing. For however late it may be, it is yet better than to live as a liar, deceived not by what seems fitted to deceive, but alas! most terribly deceived—deceived by overmuch knowledge!

So there is no longer any wonder, it is over. So it is said, and so says the despairing individual, and repeats it in despair, and repeats it mockingly, and consoles himself with the mockery while wounding others—as if all mockery were not a two-edged sword! But you, my reader, know that just here our discourse stands confronting wonder. The discourse would not therefore take you by surprise, nor deceive you by throwing dust in your eyes, while the thought gleams like a lightning flash as everything is reversed; nor would it shock you out of yourself in startled confusion. He who has actually experienced what has been described, he readily penetrates with his thought the jumble of confused memories, and if he has not experienced it, then reading or hearing a discourse will be of doubtful value to him. But you, who are yourself in a state of wonder, know that this wonder came into

being when the first wonder was destroyed in despair. And where could a more worthy object for wonder be found, than when the seeker in his wishing and striving, when the human being perishing in his despair discovers that he already has what he sought, and that the misfortune is that he stands and loses it. For take the wishing individual as he sits and dreams, call upon him and say: you have what you wished for; halt the recklessly striving individual where he hastens boldly forward on the way, halt him, and say: you have the thing you strove for; break through the despair so that the despairing individual may understand that he has it; what depth of emotion in his soul when he is overwhelmed with wonder, and again overwhelmed, because he again loses, as it were, the object of his search! The glory of the wish, the striving of daring do not a second time arouse wonder, the break of despair prevents this, but that the thing sought is given, that it is in the possession of him who stands there and loses it in his misunderstanding: this arouses the wonder of the whole man.

And what stronger expression for wonder can there be than that the wondering individual is changed, just as when the wishing individual changes color; what stronger expression than this, that he really is changed! And so it is with this second wonder, it changes the seeker, and by this change he comes to seek something different, indeed the very opposite; for now seeking means the seeker is himself changed. He no longer looks for the place where the thing sought is concealed, for this is exactly within him; nor does he look for the place where God is, he does not strive there, for God is with him, very near him, near him everywhere, omnipresent in every moment, but he

shall be changed so that he may in truth become the place where God dwells.

But wonder, which is the beginning of all deeper understanding, is an equivocal passion, involving both fear and happiness. Or was it not a fearful thing, my reader, that the object of your seeking was so near you, that you did not seek God, but God sought you? Was it not a fearful thing that you could not move without being in Him, and that you could not be at rest, without being in Him, nor be so obscure that you were not in Him? Nor could you flee to the ends of the earth without His being there and in every place upon the way; and you could not hide yourself in the abyss without His being there and in every place upon the way; and you could not say to Him: in a moment, because He was also there in the very moment you said this. Was it not a fearful thing when the playfulness of youth and the immaturity of despair yielded to earnestness; when that which you said did not exist was present everywhere about you, and enveloped you on every side! Was it not a blessed thing that superior power could shut you up in the darkest prison, but could not shut God out? Was it not blessed, was it not indeed blessed that you could fall into the deepest pit, where you could not see the sun or the stars, and still could see God? Was it not a blessed thing that you could lose yourself in the solitude of the desert and yet immediately find your way to God? Was it not a blessed thing that you could become so old as to have forgotten everything, and still never forget God because He cannot become something past; that you could become dumb and yet cry to Him, deaf and yet hear Him, blind and yet see Him? Was it not a blessed thing that you dared rely upon Him, know-

ing that He would not say, as men do: in a moment, because He was with you in the very moment of saying it?

But whoever leaves out the fear, let him look well to himself lest he also leave out the finding. It is so easy to find God, or if someone wishes to say the same thing in another way, it is so hard to find Him that some men even prove that He exists, and find evidence necessary. Let the work of proving it be hard and especially troublesome for him who tries to understand that it proves anything; for the author of the proof, it is easy because he has placed himself outside, he does not deal with God, but considers something about God.

But if, on the contrary, seeking signifies that one is oneself changed, then the seeker may well look to himself. One learns wonder from a child and fear from a man, which is a helpful preparation, since fear surely comes with God when He comes and makes all proof superfluous. Or is it perhaps courage that the one who seeks, thoughtlessly ignoring the danger, should sit unchanged himself, and prove and prove that an omnipresent being exists—an omnipresent being who indeed at the very moment of the proving sees through the reasoner—but without having any scientific judgment about his proof. Has the omnipresent God really become like a rare freak of nature whose existence the scientist demonstrates, or like a variable star observable only at century-long intervals, and whose existence therefore requires proof, especially for the sake of the centuries during which it is not seen?

But true wonder and fear can one man not learn from another. Only when it compresses and expands your soul, yours, just yours, yours alone in the whole world, because

you are alone with the omnipresent God, only then does it in truth exist for you. If a speaker had the eloquence of an angel, and if he had a presence that could inspire fear in the most courageous, so that you fell into the deepest wonder, as we say, over his eloquence, and terror gripped you when you heard him: it is not this terror and not this fear which helps you. It holds true of every human being, of the greatest and of the humblest, that neither an angel nor legions of angels, nor all the terrors of the world, can inspire him with true wonder and true fear, but they may indeed make him superstitious. True wonder and fear first appear only when he, just he, whether greatest or humblest, is alone with the omnipresent God. The strength of power and wisdom and actions does not determine the strength of the God-relationship. Did not the wise men of Egypt perform signs almost as great as those of Moses? Suppose they had performed greater, what would it have signified? Nothing, absolutely nothing with respect to the God-relationship. But Moses feared God, and Moses marveled about God, and this fear and this wonder, or the fear and happiness of the wonder, determine the strength of the God-relationship.

It is quite true, as the reason says, that there is nothing to wonder about, but precisely for this reason the wonder is secure—because the reason stands sponsor for it. Let the reason condemn the perishable, let it only clear the ground—then the wonder comes to the right place, in the changed individual. Everything which belonged to the first wonder, can the reason consume; let it do so, thus mysteriously helping you to the true wonder, for mysterious it is, since it contends against the reason's judgment about itself. But if a man comes no further, then let him

not accuse the reason nor triumph over it because it has gained the victory. If a prince sends a general with his army against a foreign country, and this general conquers it, and thereupon seizes it for himself as a rebel, then there is no reason to accuse him because he conquered it, but neither is there any reason for triumph since he kept it for himself. And so if a man by using his reason conquers what was indeed beautiful but was also childish, let him not accuse the reason, but if the reason finishes by becoming a rebel, then let him not be triumphant. But the wonder exists in the changed individual.

The experience here described was once the lot of every man in the moment of decision, when the sickness of the spirit struck in, and he felt himself imprisoned in existence, imprisoned everlastingly Alas, if many consoled themselves with the thought of having escaped this danger, I wonder if he was wiser who through shrewdness and cowardice defrauded himself when he believed he was defrauding God and life! It has happened thus to everyone at the time when the jesting and illusions and distractions of life were over; alas, if many boasted of their reckless independence, I wonder if he also became wiser whose dissolute life became a parasite on a secondary branch because he had not been bound! So every man experienced this once, alas, and if many flatter themselves on enjoying a more advantageous condition, I wonder if he is wiser who unbound did not realize that just because of this he was also unfree.

When the thing sought is assumed to be given, seeking for it signifies that the seeker himself is changed, so that he becomes the place where the object of his search can in truth exist. And if the thing sought was indeed given,

it was so near that it was as if it were again lost. What stronger expression is there for the fear that it is as if the object sought were lost, except this certainty that it is lost: consequently a man is always losing ground. What a distance now separates him from the time when he entertained the wish, when he was recklessly venturesome, when the thing sought was far away, when his self-esteem defiantly asserted that it did not exist—and now it has come so close to him that it is lost, and the loss even dates back to the distant past! The seeker should be changed, and alas, he was changed—thus he has fallen away. And the changed condition in which he exists, we call sin. Therefore the thing sought exists, the seeker himself was the place, but he is changed, changed from having once been the place where the thing sought was. Oh, now there is no wonder, no ambiguity! When the soul apprehends this, its condition is fear and trembling in the consciousness of guilt, passion in the sorrow following remembrance, love in the repentance of the prodigal.

My reader, was it not so! The discourse would not take you by surprise, it has no authority to extort a confession of sin from you. On the contrary it willingly admits its impotence in this respect, and, should anyone so desire, then it willingly assures him that not all the eloquence in the world can convince a man of his sin, but then it also reminds him not to fear the eloquence of sinners but rather the omnipresence of the Holy One, and to fear even more his own evasion of it. If a man would have an essential understanding of his sin, he must understand it through being alone, just he alone, alone with the Holy One who knows all. This is the only true fear and trem-

bling, only this is the true sorrow which the remembrance of God awakens in a man, this is the true repentance His love encourages. If a speaker had a voice like the thunder of heaven, if he had a countenance that inspired terror, if he knew how to accuse with the eye, and if he now, as you sat there, my reader, pointed at you and said: "You, you are a sinner," and he did this with such impressiveness that your eyes sought the ground, and the blood receded from your cheeks so that it was long before you recovered from the impression, then would you indeed understand that by his conduct he had transformed the scene into a theater where he played the buffoon, and should be pitied because he interfered with your finding the stillness. A fear and trembling inspired by the abomination of a religious debauch is not the true fear and trembling. Just as a man should never seek his peace through another human being lest he build on a foundation of sand, so also he should never rely on its being the duty of some other man to convict him of being a sinner, although another may well remind him of his responsibility to God, if he does not discover it by himself. Every other kind of understanding is mere distraction, and this would be but a jest if I were to judge you, but it is very serious if you forget that God will judge you.

The object sought is therefore given, God is near enough, but *no one can see God without purity, and sin is impurity, and therefore no one can take cognizance of God without becoming a sinner.* The first is an inviting word, and the soul looks upward to the heights where the goal is, but in the same instant another word sounds which mentions the beginning, and this is a depressing word. And yet it is true for everyone who would under-

stand the sin in himself. The unauthoritative address cannot attempt to persuade anyone, it cannot even directly benefit anyone. Whoever feels himself the stronger cannot possibly be persuaded by the address, and whoever allows himself to be persuaded, shows thereby that he is the stronger. Therefore the discourse will not try to outwit you or get something on you; on the contrary, it gives you a weapon to hand against the speaker, if you are foolish enough to wish to judge him, which would indeed be thoughtless, since the serious thing is whether anyone forgets to accuse himself before God. For this reason you will not learn much from the discourse, if you do learn from it something about yourself, then it is by means of yourself. But if anyone demands that he should learn something about sin in general, then he requires too much from the discourse, for then would he be deceived.

So now the discourse stands at the beginning. It does not begin with wonder, and certainly not with doubt; for one who doubts his own guilt, makes only a bad beginning, or rather he continues what was badly begun with sin! What comes with sin goes with sorrow; this is indeed true about sin itself. Sorrow is therefore the beginning, and the trembling of the soul is the vigilance of the sorrow. The more profound the sorrow, the more will the individual feel himself to be nothing, less than nothing, and this is precisely because the sorrow is that of a seeker who begins to take cognizance of God. It has always been said that even in paganism itself, the gods never sold the highest for nothing, that a divine envy which led the gods to set a price upon themselves, determined the condition of the relationship: how then, if an individual wished to

become like God, how should there not be a requirement; and this requirement is that a man become a sinner. And yet it is not, if I dare to speak thus, a courtesy the man shows Him, that His holy presence makes the individual a sinner, as if the individual were not a sinner, but became one first in His holy presence. On the contrary, he who seeks to understand himself in his consciousness of sin before God, he understands that it is not like a general statement that all men are sinners, for he knows that the emphasis does not rest on generalities. The more profound the sorrow is, the more a man feels himself to be nothing, less than nothing, and this diminishing self-esteem is the sign that the sorrowful is the seeker who is beginning to be conscious of God. In a worldly sense we say it is a poor soldier who does not hope to become a general, but in a godly sense the converse is true. The less a man thinks of himself, not as a man in general, or about being a human being, but of himself, as an individual, and not with respect to his talents, but with regard to his guilt, the more significant God becomes to him. We would not increase the guilt in order to make God greater, but we would intensify the consciousness of guilt. And as the civil authority who watches over justice sometimes uses stool pigeons who are themselves criminals, so everyone whom the Holy One uses, is himself a debtor, sometimes a debtor in the stricter sense, so that God is concerned both in saving the transgressor and in saving others through him.

The more profound the sorrow, the more profound is the apprehension of the power of sin. It might therefore seem to be the strongest expression of the deepest sorrow for one to feel himself the chief of sinners. Indeed it is understood that there has been much vain wis-

dom, even strife and disputings, about this distinction; in an age when it was the highest expression for the highest dignity, men have exerted all their power to gain this recognition. Every kind of wrong endeavor is distressing, but the saddest of all are the religious aberrations. When a youth goes astray, then we pin our hopes to his later years; it is even more distressing when a man goes astray; but when someone goes astray in the last thing that can save him, where then is salvation! But it does not follow from this that it would be praiseworthy to leave the religious undecided, and so in that way escape the error. The greatest of sinners, and rivalry over it! We will not break into laughter, even if the contradiction is present that justifies laughter, for though it is indeed ludicrous, yet it is not the time nor the place to laugh because a man has introduced folly into a serious consideration. The discourse will not drop the expression without further ceremony, but linger a little to ask: How does a man come to know that he is the greatest of sinners? If he learns to know that he is a sinner, then it happens that he learns it, just he, by being alone with the Holy One. If he is not thus alone, he will not even come to know that he is a sinner, to say nothing of being the greatest. Whence comes then this more or less by which he determines himself as the greatest? Is not this *more* an evil, is it not caused by fraud and deceit; is it not a departure from earnestness, an accumulation of inanities? An unfortunate man whose suffering made him serious, is recognized at once by the fact that he does not worry over whether others suffer less, but simply says: "My suffering is heavy—I suffer." One recognizes a true lover at once by the fact that he does not defile love's meeting, which

naturally seeks solitude, by bringing a rabble with him, a crowd of witnesses, which is permissible as soon as he believes *that* he loves *more than* others *do*. No, his straightforward, sincere profession is short: "I love." And so it is also with the consciousness of sin, the simple assertion is the most sincere. All comparison is worldly, all insistence upon it is a worldly clinging to the bondage of vanity; and worse than one's own guilt is self-righteousness, and worse than self-righteousness is taking one's guilt in vain, and so in earnest becoming the greatest of sinners just through vainly wishing to be acknowledged as such.

Whoever is alone with the consciousness of sin, will indeed feel himself, yet not by comparison with others, *to be the greatest sinner, for he will be conscious of himself* as an individual, and he will feel in himself the essential magnitude of his sin in the presence of the Holy One. If there is distraction in making excuses for oneself on the ground that others are more guilty, then there is also distraction in wishing to determine one's own sin through its relation to the sins of others, which indeed no one knows. But when you fast, my reader, anoint your head and wash your face, then you will neither be distracted by seeing that others are more guilty, nor will you be distracted by seeing that others are less guilty. And do not do in public that which is not a common undertaking, but rightly, *in secret*. Oh, *it is much easier to* look to the right and to the left than to look into oneself; much easier to bargain and to haggle, as also to underbid, than to be silent—but the more difficult is nevertheless the one thing needful. Even in daily life everyone knows that it is more difficult to stand in the presence of a celebrity, before a kingly majesty, than to travel with the

crowd, more difficult to stand alone and silent in the presence of a man of keen insight than to talk in a general assembly of equals; how much more difficult, then, to stand alone in the presence of the Holy One, and be silent. We see God in great events, in the raging of the elements, and in the eras of world history, we clean forget what the child understood, that when it closes its eyes it sees God. And when the child closes its eyes and smiles, it becomes an angel—alas, when a man is alone and silent before God, he becomes a sinner! Learn first to be alone, thus you will learn true worship which is to think highly of God, and humbly of yourself—not more humbly than of your neighbor, as if that lent you distinction, but remember you are in the presence of God—not more humbly than of your enemy, as if that made you better, for remember, you are before God: but true worship is to think humbly about yourself.

Whoever apprehends his sin in this manner, and wishes in this stillness to learn the art—an art that you do not despise, my reader—of sorrowing over his sin, he will discover that confession is not merely an enumeration of particular sins, but is an understanding before God, of the continuity of sin in itself. Yet will he again walk on a narrow path, for the solitary way is narrow and shut in, but everywhere are there blind doors; he needs only to say a word, and one opens of itself—and the prisoner breathes the air of freedom, or so he thinks, for a moment. Thus if he begins to speak about the prevalence of sin, not in himself but in the human race, and catches at this thought, then a door opens—alas, how easily he breathes now, he whose breathing was so labored; how easy now his flight, his whose progress was so difficult;

how free he is now, he who had always labored, for now he is become an observer. And many certainly desire to hear his observations. Now the case is entirely different, and so easy, so altered, aye, so altered that, as the serious minded among us say, the question becomes how to justify God to the world, not anxiety about how to justify oneself before God. The confession of sin in general is easier, but to trace a connection from this or that particular sin, apprehended clearly and precisely, as carefully as if an impartial judge were casting up the account, this is a forced and painful road to travel—but the painful road is nevertheless the right one, and the forced way is the profitable way.

There is a trait that is much praised, but not easily acquired—sincerity. I do not speak of the amiable ingenuousness of childhood, which is sometimes also found in older people, for to praise this would be to deceive you, my reader. If it is found in you, the discourse that praises it would be almost flattering unless your childishness prevented you from understanding it thus. If it is not found in you, the eulogy becomes a mockery. This speech will not make such distinctions, it will not flatter you nor allow sincerity to be regarded as a happy gift laid beside the cradle, which only a few can have. Such a conception belongs where fortune makes a distinction, not where the God-relationship proclaims equality of rights. No, sincerity is a duty, and every man ought to acquire it. In the midst of many distractions, it is really difficult to gain. I do not mean that a man so distracted at once becomes a liar, but he lacks time and concentration to understand himself. Is it not so? A man desires something with all his heart, or so he thinks; however many things happen before the wish is fulfilled, or fulfillment fails to come, and

he has become changed. It is possible that he has become wiser, but his wisdom still lacks something, a definite impression that he had once wished it, and not a fantastic notion that for part of a year past he had wished it, but that he no longer wishes it. It is necessary if the two states of mind are to be beautifully and harmoniously reconciled, that they get a little common meeting ground where they may become intelligible to one another. The wisdom is perhaps good enough but the wise man may be lacking a little sorrow over himself. A man makes a definite resolve, but time bargains with him, and he is changed, and the half must suffice. Perhaps the resolution may have been too ambitious with respect to his ability; very well, but there is still a little lacking, a little sorrow, a little clarity, whether it was time that had given him an appearance of wisdom, or that he had actually become wiser.

And now guilt and error and sin! Alas, how many men are there who after a year and a day, know precisely what they had wished, what they had resolved, what they had reproached themselves for, how they had transgressed! And yet God can require sincerity of a man. How much more difficult does it not become! For a man may actually in all sincerity endeavor more and more to reach clarity about himself, but dare he offer this clarity to one who knows the human heart, as something entirely trustworthy between himself and God? O, far from it! Even he who strives in utmost rectitude, and perhaps he most of all, will always have some part of his account which he dares not trust himself to make up, because he cannot be sure in a particular matter whether he may not have more or less guilt than he knows. And it is doubtless best

to have the matter so. A man has only one God, and if he cannot reach an understanding with Him, to whom, then, shall he go? Here we see the necessity of understanding from the individual sin and transgression, that sin is a continuity, an unfathomable continuity. If someone were to say to you, my reader, that then it is of no use to acquire sincerity, since even he who strives most honestly, always remains somewhat confused, then do you, my reader, as the speaker also does, make yourself as one who had not heard it. The speaker is no very fast runner, but verily, he will neither allow himself to be retarded by cowardice, nor by a cowardly envy which seeks equality in mediocrity and would transform the ardor of the spirit into obviousness, and an enthusiasm that serves without pay, into a fellowship of profits. That this wretchedness which cannot endure anything better exists, this deceitful friendship that seeks to delay, you know well, my reader, but do not dispute with it; this is not yet the place where you shall fight, even to strive with it is to grant it a victory Oh, seek rather the forgetfulness of silence; in silence you learn to know quite a different thing, to know about your own guilt.

In this way is sincerity difficult to acquire. It is easier to conceal oneself in the crowd, and to drown one's own guilt in that of the race, easier to hide from oneself than to stand revealed before God in sincerity. For, as we have said, this sincerity is not a perpetual enumeration of particulars, but neither is it a mere signature on a piece of white paper, an admission of an empty generality over one's name, and a confessing individual is not a hasty co-signer in the huge rent-roll of the race.

But without sincerity no repentance. For repentance finds the empty generality loathsome, but neither is it a

petty calculator in the service of faint-heartedness, but an earnest seeker after God. To repent of a trivial generality is a contradiction like offering the most profound passion a feast of superficialities, but to stick fast in remorse for some particular transgression is to repent on one's own responsibility, not before God, and to weaken one's resolve is self-love in melancholy of spirit. Oh, I wonder if it is so easy to repent: to love, and to feel one's wretchedness more and more deeply; to love, while suffering under punishment; to love, and not to reject the punishment under Providence; to love, and not to cherish a secret resentment, as if one suffered wrong; to love, and never to cease the search for the sacred source of this pain!

And whoever considers his sin knows that there is a difference between sins. He learned this in his early childhood, and each one best considers it for himself. It has also happened in the world, that one through hearing a discourse which painted sin in general in colors of horror, recognized a terrible relationship to some particular sin. But a religious debauch is still the most abominable of all. Such a speech may perhaps have affrighted the purer and nourished anxiety in the soul of the innocent, an anxiety that continued. But to what end is the speaker's terrifying rhetoric? Only by himself alone does a man understand that he is guilty. One who does not understand it thus, merely misunderstands it; and one who understands it will doubtless also find the explanation, the severe, or the milder or the quickly helpful, everything as he has deserved it. But it is abominable, for someone who has to bear the heavy punishment for a more terrible sin, to profit from this by terrifying others, thus committing a new sin. Alas, the indulgence of wantonness is indeed a

new sin, but the ungodly imposition of dark passions upon others is likewise a sin! And you, my reader, know that the earnest thing is to be alone before the Holy One, whether it is the applause of the world that is left outside, or the accusation of the world which retires to a distance. Do you suppose that the woman who was a sinner felt a deeper guilt when the scribes accused her than when no accuser was present, and she stood alone before the Lord? But you also know that the most dangerous form of deception is self-deception, and his condition is the most precarious who is deceived by much knowledge, and further, you know that it is a tragic weakness to find consolation in another's frivolity, but also a tragic weakness to derive one's fear at second hand from another's melancholy. In these things let God rule; He knows best how to suit all the needs of the man who seeks Him in solitude.

—And there is the place, my reader, you know where, and there is the opportunity, you know how, and there is the moment, which calls: yet today.

Here this discourse ends—in the confession of sins. But can it indeed be the end? Should not gladness now be victorious? Shall there be only sin with sorrow? Must the soul sit oppressed, and the harp of joy not be tuned? You are accustomed perhaps to learning more. You even know much more yourself; then seek the fault in the speaker and the speech. If you really are farther along, do not permit yourself to be delayed; but if not, O, consider well that one is terribly deceived when he is deceived by much knowledge.

Let us imagine a pilot, and assume that he had passed every examination with distinction, but that he had not

as yet been at sea. Imagine him in a storm; he knows everything he ought to do, but he has not known before how terror grips the seafarer when the stars are lost in the blackness of night, he has not known the sense of impotence that comes when the pilot sees the wheel in his hand become a plaything for the waves; he has not known how the blood rushes to the head when one tries to make calculations at such a moment; in short, he has had no conception of the change that takes place in the knower when he has to apply his knowledge.

What fair weather is to the sailor, that for the ordinary person is to live at the same pace with others and with the race, but the moment of decision, the dangerous moment of reflection when he takes himself out of the environment to be alone before God, to become a sinner, this is the stillness that upsets the customary order like a storm at sea. He knew all this, knew what would happen to him, but he did not know how anxiety would seize him, as he felt himself deserted in the manifold wherein he has his soul, he did not know how the heart beats when help from others, and the guidance from others, and the standards and the distractions afforded by others, vanish in the stillness; he did not know the trembling of the soul, when it is too late to shout for human aid, since no one can hear him: in short, he had no idea of how knowledge is changed when he needs to apply it.

Is this perhaps your case, my reader? I do not judge, I merely ask you. Alas, while the number of those who know so much increases more and more, the really able men become fewer and fewer! But it was such a man that you once wished to be. You have surely not forgotten what we said about sincerity: that a man must retain a

clear recollection of what he once wished to be; and now you are to prove your sincerity before God in the confession of sins. What was it you once wished? You wished to strive after the highest ideals, to apprehend the truth and dwell in it; you would spare neither time nor effort; you would renounce everything, including every illusion. If you did attain the highest goal, you wanted to make sure of being clearly conscious of what you had formerly meant in striving to attain it. If this was ever so little, you would still rather be faithful over a little than unfaithful over much. If this was your sole thought, and you became the poorest of all in the midst of the rich who know everything, you would still rather be as true as gold—and this is in the power of everyone who wills it, for gold is for the rich, but a golden loyalty is possible also for the poor. And he who was faithful over a little, faithful in the day of trial, when the reckoning is made up, faithful in the understanding of his debt, faithful in the stillness where no reward beckons, but only the guilt becomes clear, faithful in this sincerity which acknowledges everything, even the imperfection of the sincerity, faithful in the love that repents, the humble love whose demand is for self-accusation: he shall also be made ruler over more.

Was not this what you wished? For we are surely agreed that in relation to the essential, knowing it is essentially identical with the ability to do it. The child thinks otherwise, and when the little one studies what has been assigned to him, and now perhaps asks his older sister to hear him recite it, but she happens to be busy with other things and says, "No, my dear boy, I haven't time, but read over your lesson five or ten times, and then sleep on

it, and in the morning you will know it very well"; then the child believes her, does what he was told, and knows it very well the next day. But the adult learns in a different manner, and if one were to learn the Holy Scriptures by heart, there might be something beautiful in the procedure, in so far as there was something childlike in it, but essentially, a mature person learns only by appropriation, and he appropriates essentially only that which is essential to living. O, this, in the midst of all distress, is man's most beautiful joy over life and over the race, and over being human; O, underneath the stillness, a beautiful concord with all men; O, in solitude, a beautiful fellowship with all! For it is not the case that one man has an essentially different task from another, just as little as there is an essential difference in the outward appearance of one man from another, but it is true that every one understands the task a little differently, and each in his own way. And it is not true, as in the confusion of understanding, that there are different ways and different truths and new truths, but it is true that there are many ways which all lead to the one truth, and each man walks his own way. Hence the individuality, when the essential becomes the possession of an individual, and this individuality is conditioned and discovered, by doing the essential.

Has the speech become contentious? It is far from wishing to mention individuality, about which there are disputes in the world, as if it were another gift of fortune. No, everyone who possesses something essential as the result of having appropriated it, possesses primitiveness and individuality. And therefore to remind ourselves that the object of this discourse is to understand that this stillness exists only by becoming still.

And where can a man become still? There is indeed a place for it, but not in any external or immediate sense, for if one does not bring the stillness with him, the place profits him nothing. Therefore, in a certain sense there is no place; O, this: in a certain sense, is it not indeed disquieting to the mind! And when does a man need stillness most? When one is most strongly moved. Is this thought not sufficient to drive the stillness away? Where can a man flee to escape from himself? Aye, if he would flee, he escapes precisely the stillness. Is there then nothing to do? Aye, if a man will do nothing, then he again escapes the stillness in the stillness of spiritual death. Is it then so easy to become still? Now a sense of security tempts because there is still time enough, now an impatience tempts because it is too late, now a beckoning hope, now a lingering memory, now a tempestuous resolution, now an echo of the world's judgment overtakes you with its mockery, as if the way of stillness is the road to a desert of illusion where the lone individual perishes; now an echo from the selfishness in yourself disturbs the stillness with a tinge of self-admiration. Now a comparison that amuses, now an estimate that diverts, now a little forgetfulness assisted by thoughtlessness; now a little advance by means of self-confidence; now a fantastic conception of God's infinitude; now a little depression at having to tell omniscence what it already knows; now a reckless leap which gains nothing; now a melancholy sigh that feeds the melancholy of your spirit; now a little sadness which benumbs; now a surprising clarity; now a stillness of plans and thoughts, and dreams of resolution, and pictures drawn by the imagination, instead of a stillness of guilt and accounting and the compact of

purpose with the clear consciousness of guilt and the omniscient God. Is it then so easy to become still?

To have been very near the stillness, and yet to have grasped an illusion, and to have to begin again and hence in greater disquietude! To have found consolation in another, and then to discover that it was self-deception, a false stillness, hence to have to begin again in greater disquietude! To have been disturbed by the world, by an enemy, by a friend, by a false teacher, by a hypocrite, by a mocker, and then to discover that it is self-deception to charge another with the responsibility, and hence to begin again in greater disquietude! To have striven, to have exerted one's power to the uttermost, and then to discover that one can do nothing, that one cannot give himself this stillness, because it belongs to God! If someone says this is the right expression, namely that the stillness is in no man's power, then let one consider carefully whether it may not be indolence that speaks. It is indeed the truth, even an apostle bears witness to it, but I wonder if this testimony was merely a notion, a hasty general observation, or was it not so difficult to understand this human nothingness and to have one's life in it, that even the apostle with his eternal resolution was not able to realize it, but needed the assistance of an angel of Satan, who through daily experience and by means of daily suffering helped him out of bondage to illusion, helped him out of having his wisdom in something learned by rote, his peace founded on general assurances, his trust in God in the form of rumor. Or had someone taught the apostle this so he could repeat it? It has been heard before that the wise man needed an angel to guide and counsel him; and if Paul had spoken of this, he might have learned it by rote, but that the wise man needed an angel of Satan

for everyday use, has certainly taken a long time to learn.

Still the discourse would not cause division. What God requires of every man in particular, had best be left to God Himself. And when the poor man, or he who labors in drudgery for a wretched subsistence for himself and his dependents, or when the servant whose time for the most part belongs to another, when these, as it perhaps seems to themselves, have only a poor opportunity to consider the affairs of the soul, then who could doubt, who could be so insolent and presumptuous, as, instead of having sympathy with this differential status in the earthly life, to carry this into the life of the spirit also; who would dare deny that the divine blessing is here in abundance like all of God's blessings! But, my reader, if anyone, the prey of an aristocratic distemper, found existence loathsome, in self-importance despised the simple, and feared lest life should not be able to provide tasks enough for his many thoughts, then do you not think that this is the miraculous nature of truth: that the simple understand it and the wisest man never quite exhausts it, and he does not become indolent because of this, but rather, enthusiastic. Oh, in this we both agree, my reader, for this thought is also understood in the stillness, where everyone finds enough to think about through becoming guilty.

LOVE CONQUERS ALL

(ON THE OCCASION OF A WEDDING)

UNCLARIFIED moods rest in the depths of the soul, secure in love's beautiful assurance; the organ tones have ceased to sound, and only their echoes again move the soul, desiring to translate the beautiful assurance into sacred feelings: now is the time for speech! The voice of an individual will be heard. How poor the words from his lips must seem in comparison with the wealth of feeling in the beautiful and sacred emotion! May not the spoken word be disturbing, the well-meant word inopportune, and the word of guidance portentous! And yet it must be spoken, and it must be spoken with decisiveness. The indeterminate wealth of feeling must be expressed, the word must be named; clarity without in the least wishing to disturb, must extract from the word its utmost significance.

What a change, what commensurability in this incommensurability! For what is so clear and precise and definite as a man's duty is and ought to be, and what is so mysterious as the impulse of love! And yet, love must here become duty. And what is more transparent and intent upon the future than a sacred promise, and what is less concerned with the future than the presence of love in the lovers! And yet love here demands a promise. And what is so terrible to mention as a curse, and what is so remote from this as the pure joy of the lovers! And yet this word must be mentioned in connection with love!

But it is a free matter, and just as the lovers become free by being bound to one another, so is this step a resolve of the free will. We are glad with those who today rejoice, whom love has made free in their union, but it must not be spoken with veiled words or disparagingly about the marriage pledge, as if it were something less significant because it is a free act, since, on the contrary, it is the one thing needful in connection with the most beautiful form of human happiness.

And so now these two, whom life has joined together in the happiness of love, are at this moment resolved, and a pact is to be instituted between them. A pact forever. Forever—is not this word by its very strength almost portentous, since it is as if death came between, and it is upon the grave one lays the garland of everlastings? Oh, far from it, for this ominous word is a beautiful announcement. The marriage pledge is indeed like a garland of everlastings, but love weaves it, and duty says it must be woven, and it is love's happiness to weave it, and duty says it must be woven—each day from the blossoms of the moment. Eternity is not here through with time, but the pact of love is eternity's beginning in time. The eternal resolution and the duty must forever remain with the wedded pair throughout time in the union of their love, and each anniversary shall be a solemn holiday, with power in its remembrance and hope in its promise.

The spoken word must be definite, and it must also be uttered with authority. And the speech shall be addressed to you, respected bridegroom; it does not offer congratulations, but the speaker asks you an earnest question, and he has authority to demand an earnest answer. He does not ask you about your happiness, but whether you have consulted God and your conscience. The ques-

tion is not intended to dissipate your happiness, nor is it indifferent to it. The question desires only to make your happiness secure, if you answer deliberately, and it is asked in earnestness for your own sake, lest you answer frivolously. And though it seems to you so wholly natural, so completely in harmony with the order of things, that you should be bound to one whom the early wishes of parents and relatives had selected, to one with whom you felt yourself united in an anticipation that finally passed over into certainty, to one to whom you felt yourself drawn in so many ways, until love revealed itself as the ultimate ground, and took over the preparation into its glorious possession: nevertheless though our earnest question need by no means give pause to a hectic and surprised resolution, which often enough gives rise to late regrets, it would make you pause with a sense of the responsibility of duty, to lay the emphasis of choice upon the quiet experience.

And next the speech shall be directed to you, respected bride, it will not disturb you with its question or trouble you by arousing difficult thoughts, but it will ask you with the same earnestness as the equality of the pact requires, whether you have consulted with God and your conscience. Oh, the question will not make your happiness precarious, it will not make you weak, it will make you, in the freedom of earnestness, equally strong with the husband to whom as a wife you are to be submissive. And though you feel with a joyous confidence and perfect trust that happiness could not have come for you in any other way, that it could not be otherwise than that you should be united with him whom long association and the close relationship, and participation in so many things, and mutual sympathy bound to you until love

came and explained all that went before as a beautiful preface, a dowry of security, a wealth of happiness: nevertheless, though the earnest question is far from wishing to interrupt the many thoughts, it would still imbue you with the sense of the responsibility of duty to lay the emphasis of choice upon the almost imperceptible transition of this quiet experience.

And then there is required a promise, and the speaker has the authority to require it. But the requirement is in all its earnestness a challenge to the lovers. It will give the worthy a solemn opportunity to announce freely and in the sight of God that which it is hard for the lovers to keep silent about, that which it is sweet to communicate to a confidant, that which, when here expressed, receives its consecration.

When this has been done, the officiating authority will unite the happy pair and make earnestness of what is already earnest. For the act itself has its own earnestness, and when this is not found in the wedded, the act is desecrated, for marriage is not merely a temporal event. But when the earnestness exists, the officiating authority gives to the act the stamp of earnestness, and the pact is concluded.

On the other hand, the unauthorized discourse has no lovers to unite. But still, my hearer, you can give it your attention. For as was said above, the act has its own seriousness, and this does not consist in external happenings, that some curious people have come as witnesses, that two persons have effected an outward change in the circumstances of their lives. And that earnestness the authorized speaker presupposes in the wedded pair, and that it is thus mature. If it came into being only in that moment of the ceremony, who would dare to answer the

question which asks about something past, though this past is also the present? Or, if the speaker in that moment must develop this earnestness in the lovers, then must he speak quite otherwise, he must say much which it is risky to say now at the last moment, difficult to say to just these two, though it would have been profitable for them to have considered it. Hence there is given a reflection which in earnestness of thought already stands before the altar. To such a thoughtful consideration, then, my hearer, I invite you, and with the marriage ceremony in mind, I shall consider the theme:

LOVE CONQUERS ALL,

viewed as the resolution that constitutes marriage.

And you, my hearer, will you also hold that solemn moment fast before your thought, and not concern yourself with the deliberation in any other manner than as if it concerned yourself; it may be that for you the marriage pact is something in the future or something past; for it is something irrelevant only to a fool. And surely here we are in agreement, that a discourse about godly matters should never be contentious or discordant with anything except that which is ungodly. When therefore the poor man, or one who in a humble situation works for his bread, without on that account being excluded from the happiness of love, when he must gather in toilsome care and take many a weary step in order to get the necessities together, while the master or overseer only too well understands, perhaps, that the duties of the service must first and foremost be attended to, when there is left only the scanty opportunity, the sparingly measured time, for the godly consideration of the heart's concerns, upon which the privileged, perhaps wisely, perhaps foolishly,

spend so much time—when these two lovers finally also stand before the altar and in all brevity are declared wedded: Oh, my hearer, we are surely agreed that God, who is present when the pact is made, not only as a witness but to grant His blessing upon it, does not in His blessing make a distinction like that in the speech of men. Because He alone is rich, He has but one blessing, and at one and the same price for all; be the believer great or humble, wise or simple, clothed in gold or in linsey, rich in thoughts or poor in spirit. But if anyone, man or woman, attacked by an aristocratic distemper, be inhuman enough to find the sacred observances too simple, if anyone wished to invent new rites, then are we agreed, my hearer, that this is the miracle of the godly ordinance, that the simple finds everything therein, and the wise more than he can fathom, when he earnestly thinks himself in relation thereto, and thinks earnestly about himself.

An old adage says that love is older than everything else; and many a beautiful and profound thought has been linked with this word, in order by the aid of the adage to explain existence. But just as the adage is valid in relation to great things, so it is also valid wherever love is present: it is older than all other things. So in the life of an individual; when love awakens it is older than everything, for when it is, it is as if it had been there a long time, it presupposes itself far back in the distant past, until all search for its origin ends in the inexplicable. While one generally says about all beginning that it is difficult, this does not hold true of love. Its happy awakening knows no labor, and no preparation precedes. If love does indeed sometimes generate pain, it is not itself born with pain: lightly and jubilantly it breaks forth in its mysterious becoming. Miraculous beginning!—But

the life of freedom requires a beginning, and a beginning is here a resolution, and the resolution has its own labor and pain, the beginning its difficulty. The individual conceiving a resolution cannot be finished, for then would he already have experienced that of which the resolution is the beginning, but if no resolution is taken, then such a man will doubtless share the experience that sometimes comes to a speaker, that only after he is finished and has already spoken, does he know how he ought to have spoken: only after he has lived, does he know how he ought to have lived (sorry profit from life's experiences!), and how he ought to have made the beginning with the good resolution, bitter wisdom, now that there lies an entire life between the beginning and the dying man!

So the word says that love conquers all, and therefore the marriage ceremony, which is not a festive congratulation but a godly challenge, does not greet the lovers as victors, but invites them to a struggle, encloses them in the arena of a state well-pleasing unto God, encourages them to fight the good fight, strengthens their striving by means of the marriage pact, promises them victory as it also takes a promise from them, gives them a blessing for the long journey—but also informs them that the struggle is there: a struggle to be fought through, trouble to be endured, danger to be experienced, a curse if it is not borne in harmony as a blessing. And yet, is it the right place here to evoke such sorry considerations, that come soon enough with the dark thoughts and the sad experiences: in the moment of joy to call to mind the days that have no pleasure in them? But is it then sad that this high-minded word actually means something, that it is not sounding brass, not a jubilation over an imaginary victory which is badly won, or still bad if it is supposed

already won, but the announcement of an actual victory which shall be gloriously won! And is the place so unsuitable—the holy place? Is it so inopportune for joy to think about the danger; is there perhaps no time for this—in the urge of danger there is surely less time! Alas, time comes and time goes, it takes little by little; it takes from a man one good whose loss he feels, and his pain is great; alas, he does not discover that it has already long since taken away from him the thing of greatest importance: the ability to form a resolution, and that he has become so familiar with this condition that there is no dismay over its loss, the last thing which might help him to gain new strength for a renewed resolution.

No, in earnest the saying means very much, indeed it means everything to the truly wedded pair. But it desires to be understood in earnest; it does not wish to visit the wedded couple as an unexpected guest, gracing the wedding day with his high presence; but it desires to make its home with them, to meet the test of the years, to answer for everything. It is thus it would be understood, and only thus can it be said: it must be said by a beginner, but only by one who begins with the good resolution. For he who became old in the faithful service of love, tested as gold is tested and found true—for the noble poet says of the maiden, a little in love, that her young soul was tested gold, but the years and the dangers are the test—hence the venerable figure who in the course of years won the rich and incorruptible beauty of faithfulness, loyal to his pledge as his own conscience required, faithful with a man's courage and with a woman's tenderness, with a man's intrepidity and with a woman's sympathy, with the sober reflection of the understanding in the inwardness of the heart, he will doubtless say with the mild, friendly,

unassuming admonition of age: "My little children, love conquers all." And he moves youth, and almost deceives it, for when he says it, then it seems so easy, and it is so pleasant to hear him say it again. But if youth accepts the saying vain-mindedly, and would frivolously weave a bridal-wreath from it, then the experience that comes in life's struggle, intervenes between youth and venerable age, saying: "Step aside, learn respect for the venerable, but learn first what the difficulties are," and then he points to him with this word, "See, here, that love has conquered all!" Oh, how beautiful to be old, how illusory is not all eloquence beside such a witness! Has conquered all! This is the last word, and is indeed somewhat different from the first. Stay your course, O wanderer, pause to consider this difference, when you grasp it, you will doubtless be a man of resolve! *Has* conquered; so says experience engaged in the struggle of life, respectfully, about the veteran in the service, whom the marriage pact called to the good fight, whose life leaves no irregularity behind, since he became no man's debtor, because he loved much. In civil life, it is often the case that if anyone would travel to a foreign country, and he owes someone a debt, the creditor will refer the matter to the civil authority, and the journey will be prohibited. Oh, if the obligation of a sacred pledge is left unfulfilled, or but poorly fulfilled, is it not like an objection that makes the last journey the flight of a defaulter—but, no, how does it help to flee? The justice which watches over existence cannot be evaded.

So much for *has* conquered all. But our theme says: Love conquers all. And so it ought to sound in the beginning, and so it is rightly said by the resolving individual. But no one can be said to be resolved who is ignorant of

the danger, who excludes the danger from his thoughts, instead of including in his resolution a real conception of it, whose courage has therefore lost its victory, just as good deeds lose their reward, because the victory anticipated it. Nor is he resolved who runs as if uncertainly, and who certainly misses the goal when he believes he has attained it. Nor is he resolved who, improvidently trusting in some mysterious power, dares to begin the journey without including in the resolution a real conception of God's assistance, of its necessity, and of its sufficiency. Nor is the resolution of which we speak, a common resolution because in such a moment the two are of like mind, and both without a resolve.

Does life give evidence of only one kind of unhappy love in marriage, when death separates them and only the sorrowing one remains behind? Oh, death does not have this power to make unhappy; if nothing else separates them, they are nevertheless united. Yet perhaps someone says, "I know very well what you mean and what the discourse hints at, but such things happen only to those who were never in love; whoever really loves, conquers all." And it is impossible to deny that he who really loves, does as the word says; but does it follow that the speaker has even as much as a clear conception of what it means really to love, and about life, and about the others? A clear conception of the change which takes place in the lover when he is called upon really to conquer all, and when this all is something real. What a difference between youthfully desiring to change the whole world and then discovering that it is one's self that is to be changed, and that the requirement is to do it with enthusiasm; or that the task is to preserve himself unchanged, alas, while everything changes! What a difference between the novel

surprise of being the first inventor of everything, and then when trouble comes, the discovering that it is the monotonous repetition of what has been experienced by others thousands and thousands of times! What a difference between youthfully wishing to fight, and the explanation that he must suffer, and that it is this which he must do with enthusiasm! To desire victory; well, one may yield to a superior force but with the consciousness of being the stronger in comparison with the individual—and now the explanation that it is his own weakness he must fight against, and the requirement neither sympathizing nor regretful, but cruelly uncompromising: that one must be enthusiastic in the struggle. When then the great requirement of the imaginary task does not give imaginary strength, but it is in reality the small and despised task that is to be done; when one does not defy a world which cheated one's expectation, but sits there abandoned by the great expectation concerning oneself, deprived of every evasion; when no broad prospect tempts one to dare the venture, but one sits inactive, despondent before the humble task of patience, which becomes even more humble because time is wasted in dreaming youth's dream over again; aye, then there is opportunity to show that one really loves, or rather that the occasion has waited too long, that it should not have been permitted to become what it is, and had the beginning been made with a resolution, then one might have understood in time that things could come to such a pass.

Consider one who resembles a lover, an enthusiast. Does life show only a single case of half-finished labor, of interrupted plans, of a sorry and miserable outcome of a brilliant beginning? Is this the only case where the striving individual was prevented by death from finishing the

work, from perfecting the plan, from attaining the goal? O Death, thou art powerless; dost thou presume to mock an enthusiast! No, the brief misfortune of the moment of death is soon overcome, and he truly dies with honor, aye, with the glorious accomplishment of his task who dares say with truth, "It was death that prevented me!" "But," says perhaps an enthusiastic youth, and thus every enthusiastic youth, "I know what you refer to; you need not even name it. I will not be disturbed or delayed or made despondent—but such things do not happen to the really enthusiastic." And this is undeniable, but does it follow that the speaker even has a clear conception of what it is to be really enthusiastic? What he will say when it is no longer his task to spring forward like a lion, but to remain in the same place and, in spite of all exertion, not to be able to move; when the task is not to traverse the world in easy flight, but to endure in a dead calm in which the enthusiasm threatens to expire; when the task is to feel the weakness, and yet not let go the enthusiasm, to hope against hope; when it is the task to endure in the long toilsome drudgery which is inseparable from every enthusiastic enterprise; when abandoned, one must even defend oneself against a sympathy which is the ruin of enthusiasm, although it seems so soothing, and be misunderstood because one does it; when it is of no avail to rush forward in wild abandon, but it is required that one assume a strait-jacket, and be enthusiastic in it: aye, there is the opportunity to show that one is really enthusiastic. And if one has begun with a resolution, it will indeed appear with what profit this was done, since it was not the drawing in of a youth's refreshing breath of air, but a self-questioning which from a distance apprehends the danger.

The first condition for a resolution is to have, that is to will to have, a real conception of life and of oneself. What is here sown in tears is reaped with songs of joy, and the grief is overcome; for the first loss is the best loss, and the first pain the saving pain, and the strict upbringing the profitable one, and the early discipline the strengthening discipline, and the shudder of the resolution gives courage, and its chastisement awakens the attention, and the final victory is the essential victory, and the last honor the only true one!

Oh, death has no power to place saddening signs upon the path of marriage through life. And yet the signs are there. What significance do they have then? There is in the folk-life many a curious custom connected with a wedding, many a mocking jest, which still has its significance, many a teasing roguery which is not without beauty, but might it not be an acceptable custom if the bridal couple before they go to the house of feasting should go to the house of mourning, that is, to the serious contemplation from which one does not fetch the bridal veil, but the resolution? Let the bride appear before the altar in all her charm, let the myrtle-crown grace the beloved; it is the humility of the resolution which alone makes her acceptable in the eyes of God, and the real conception of the resolution makes her strong in holy weakness—strong to conquer all.

It is not the purpose of the discourse, even if it could do so, to terrify by means of harrowing descriptions, to evoke horror, to which only the serious speaker, when he speaks with authority, can give the sure effect of earnestness and prevent the intrusion of despondency and low spirits, aye, even of disgust, into the impression. Oh, but are those married people alone separated between whom a

divorce was effected, between whom the uniting wedding pact became a curse; are they alone unworthy of the marriage state who made a wretched beginning by regarding the pact as a worldly agreement for earthly gain, and ended as they began; or for whom the wedding union became not a salvation but a snare that stimulated the craving of the senses, is he only a bad husband who in cowardice and lack of manliness courted adoringly a woman's beauty, who then slavishly ruled in a cowardly spirit over a slave, to whose beauty he was himself a slave in jealousy, until he ended with the ingratitude of a dastard, because the years had taken youth and beauty away from her to whom he was wedded?

Oh, no, it is here as it is with death in life. Not only are they the prey of death who lie upon a sickbed, and whom the physician has given up. Many a one whom death has marked goes about among us. And so there is many a marriage that divorce has marked. No separation has come between the married couple, but an aloof indifference divides them and makes them alien to one another—and yet, for this is why we speak about it, and yet, perhaps the old feelings are not wholly dead. There is no strife between them, no hostile difference, but feeling seems to have withdrawn itself far from the daily intercourse; and yet, perhaps they love one another, but they await an event which will tense the bowstring of resolution and lure the feeling forth to expression, for the daily events are too insignificant. They feel almost ashamed before each other because of this boredom with the insignificant events. They long perhaps for an understanding, but they cannot rightly get to speak with one another, precisely because there is an opportunity every day, and consequently the opportunity goes unused because it is more

difficult to reveal themselves to one another. They were once so happy, oh, so happy, and this consciousness which ought to strengthen them, which at least ought always to be clear, now weakens them. They lose the zest and the courage to venture, and this vanished happiness acquires a sickly, exaggerated glamor for the two lonely people. Time passes so slowly, a whole life lies there before them, they fear to make, one to the other, the first admission which could unite them in a vigorous resolution, boredom takes the place of harmony, and yet they abhor divorce as a sin. But life is so long—and then the thought of death steals in, for death looses all bonds; they scarcely dare admit it to themselves, and yet so it is. They wish themselves dead, as if that were not unfaithfulness—and yet perhaps they still love one another, and death would perhaps make them realize it. And then one seeks to find the fault in the other, and, instead of a candid discussion of the trouble, misunderstanding conducts its sorry business and estranges them from one another in suspicion and distrust, through uncharitableness and precipitancy, with reconciliation flaring up and nourishing the disease, while they still love one another.

Was it always poverty and straitened circumstances and the troubles of life which produced these consequences? Oh, a marriage of wealth and abundance is sometimes carried out, after the brief honeymoon is over, as if on bread and water, in the midst of superfluity. Was it always sorrow over incorrigible children which at last brought estrangement between the parents? Oh, it is often evident that a rare good fortune in this respect did not help the parents. Was it always the years which led to this sorry condition? Oh, how short a time is sometimes needed before this change takes place. Was it always an original

disparity in age, in culture, in social position, which soon or late must generate misunderstanding? Oh, sometimes the two are so well suited to one another that they only lack gratitude in order to be happy. Was it always environment and family relations and connections that ruined the well-begun marriage? Alas, what boots it to place the responsibility on others? The weed of evil has the peculiar property that all weeds have—it sows itself. The good seed requires care and labor; if that is lacking the good seed dies—and then the weeds come up of themselves.

Now let the observer who takes himself into account, who in a decisive moment evokes this thought, let him ask himself this question. "Dare I say that all these wedded couples did not begin with what one calls a real love for one another, so that they felt the sweetness of surprise when love awakened, felt the unrest of longing, found time to vanish when they were together, and found it so long when they were separated, found themselves glowing at the thought of being everything to one another?" Let him ask himself the question: "Dare I deny that the sad outcome may also have its explanation in the fact that in the time of youth and hope and surprise and precipitancy one lacked guidance and earnestness to renounce the softness and allure of the moment and the illusions of the imagination in order to subject oneself to the discipline of the resolve?"

For what does the resolution, which is the rebirth of love, desire? Will it stifle the joy because it wishes to save it; is its care a false friendship because it is not immediately understood? Is it nothing but pain because its beginning is not without pain; is it an eternal imprisonment because it in earnest and eternally binds the two lovers

together? But its beginning is not without pain, and not without a shudder. Consider an enthusiast. Filled with a highminded purpose, he would accomplish so much, but lo, under the labor of the resolution, the conception of life and of his own weakness so overwhelms him that he sinks in impotence, and only the conception of his duty holds him in continued effort to win the resolve. What a change! Now he fights bravely under the strict surveillance of duty, he does the little assigned for each day, but to a T as duty bids; and so he is still enthusiastic, since he understands that whether it is little or much, when duty bids it is always much. And lo, he succeeds, and the resolution is won, and the work is begun on a real scale, and lo, it is successful, and the work goes forward, and lo, it is successful, and lo, it succeeds beyond expectation, and the first enthusiasm awakens to a new and stronger life. And now his enthusiasm is not a precipitate purpose or a continued impetuosity; nor is it glowing hot in youth, drowsy in manhood, and as smoking flax in the evening of life. No, that first enthusiasm went out as in the night, when resolution came into being, and then he gained a new enthusiasm and the blessed surprise of wonder from year to year, even to the evening of life. And so will the wedding ceremony in the strict discipline of the resolution take away fancies and disappointments, and love will secure its sure refuge within the impregnable fortress of duty, and will give the resolving individual new enthusiasm, and, as time goes on, a daily wonder over his happiness.

But perhaps someone says: "It is insulting to speak thus to the lovers; instead of admiring and eulogizing, aye, of considering with respect the lovers' rare good fortune, thus enviously and pessimistically to make their

good fortune suspect." Now, to show respect for a rare good fortune, even if it were ever so rare, would seem frivolous in an edifying discourse which is not even attuned to find edification in the variances of fortune in life. And could not that objection really be an outbreak of love's seductive persuasiveness, that dangerous power which generates impulsiveness in the hearer? We show respect for the rare gift of the poet, if he uses it well; but I wonder if that love which inspires the poet to song is found thus in every day life and in every couple who are united by the marriage pact? The poet himself says that it is rare, and the poet's happy gift is also rare, just as is that love: the best wish of a perfect existence, yet no, the most beautiful dream of an imperfect view of life. Therefore the poet explains nothing; he seeks in sadness of song this remembered rarity, he seeks it burning in the craving of desire, he touches the strings powerfully in its honor, as if it were found. He sits weak in the whisper of longing, he creates by the power of his imagination the sought-for thought. We praise him, and a people is proud in the right place when it is proud of a distinguished poet! But the poet cannot help us ordinary folk, for he cannot tell us how we should conduct ourselves to become the rare individual he seeks. There is the poet's sadness. For the poet is no proud and haughty person, but his soul extends into the infinite. And when he must say to an individual, or of an individual, "No, it is not he," or "It was not she," then he has no wish to offend. Himself distressed, he seeks the consolation of song. Therefore we must not be angry with the poet; he loves existence and perhaps feels the most pain that this or that individual was not the rare example. "And yet," says the poet, "no

one can make himself this rare thing. He is a paragon, and thereby the miracle."

Now, if this paragon existed, and one should talk with him about what this address is concerned with, he simply would not understand it, nor would he answer as that objector answered, for no speech can disturb so rare a genius. But an illusory echo from poets' songs, a delusive repetition of poetic works, this he finds disturbing. On the other hand, he who feels that he is not himself this gifted individual, is concerned, and he is not disturbed by a speech reminding him of his concern, but rather he seeks edification in religious reflection. Further than this the address does not wish to go in meeting such an objection, but, my hearer, consider now the marriage ceremony itself. Who performs it? Is it a poet? No, it is a man of authority. And the rite lays everyone under sin, and the man of authority makes it earnest with the individual, and lays each one under sin who is pledged by this rite. Should it be offensive, then, if the address calls attention to the significance of the resolve, and that only the resolved individual dares to say at the beginning that love conquers all? To me it seems offensive to assume about anyone that he had not considered this. Even the happiest earthly love needs the rebirth of the resolve, the strict words of the marriage rite, its strengthening influence in the struggle, its blessing upon the way.

In seeking to make clear the sacred resolution of marriage, the address has thus reminded you, my hearer, of what you yourself have often considered, for the speech is far from being instructive. You are then in agreement with it, and yet perhaps you say: "The address is right, but much earnestness is required for the speech to produce the right impression, lest it foster impatience and

disorder the spirit." And in this you are quite right—that there is much earnestness required; verily to be a good reader or a good listener is just as great an art as to be a good speaker, and that is very great when, as here, the address is imperfect and without authority. Was not this your meaning? For you surely would not intend by this criticism to place the blame upon the speaker, as if you gained something by accusing him? Let us consider this a little more closely. Just as there is needed for making a resolution an actual conception of life, so there is also needed, as was said at the same time, an actual conception of oneself. There was perhaps one who sent his spying thoughts out to get a manifold impression of life, but who could not take himself back, who gave himself out—alas, and lost himself. But whoever binds another human being to himself by the marriage pact, by that pact enters into an obligation which no time can dissolve, and which every day requires fulfillment; from him is required a resolution, and in this resolution an actual conception of himself. And this real conception of himself, and this inwardness, this is earnestness. Now, as it is doubtless true that as this love, which the poet sings, is a longing in every human heart, so there is also in everyone a longing, a wish that desires what we might call a teacher and a guide in life, a tried man upon whom one can rely, a wise man who knows how to advise, a noble man who encourages by his example, a gifted man who has the gift of eloquence and the emphasis of persuasiveness, the serious man who guarantees the appropriation.

As a child everything is easy, one is free from the difficulty of choosing; aye, even if a father was not as he should be, the respect the child has, his unconditional obedience, helps it sometimes to learn the good even from

such a father. But then comes the period of youth and of freedom, and the time when with the beloved he seeks such a guide. Then it is important that this freedom and this choice do not become a snare. This guide which the longing seeks is a rare individual. Sometimes he is not found in every generation, and even if you are contemporaneous with such a highly worthy one, to whom you are wholly willing to yield yourself, he may not perhaps be in the same place as you, or he was there but had to leave, or you had to leave—and so, aye, so must you be content with less, that is you must try to help yourself. In life there is confusion enough; the most varied things are proclaimed and praised and despised and repeated; the most varied patterns show themselves, and disappoint, and show themselves again; the most varied guidance is proffered, and always there is companionship on the way; consolation and evasions and appeals, and warnings and songs of victory and cries of complaint are heard in wildest confusion. Ah, love and marriage are things in which everyone is experienced, and about which everyone has an opinion, and can in truth have if he earnestly wishes it. Every human being, even if unmarried, should have an abiding place, and yet there is perhaps many a marriage which does not have it, but is blown about by every puff of wind.

Now the young man thinks, misled by an accidental experience, that when the external circumstances of prosperity and happy relations of life favor love, then it is secure, and he does not perhaps consider that the liberty of action which the mental state thus attains may generate difficulties. Now one has an exaggerated conception of the depth of sorrow in loving, and cannot settle down to the simple labor of making a living; now another gives himself up too much to a bubbling over of the

feelings and distaste follows; now one of the parties has a little sober-mindedness and wishes to use it, but the other misunderstands it and believes it is coldness and indifference; now one party wishes to plan carefully and economize, and the other one does not understand it, and ascribes it to a lack of sensitiveness for anything higher. Now one becomes despondent because the repetition about him makes him bored with his own; now another's first happiness makes him impatient; now he compares, now he remembers, now he loses—who could ever finish recounting all this, no address can do it, and this makes little difference, but no human being can do it, and that is what is terrifying. Only one power is capable of doing it; that is resolution, taking heed in time.

Where is earnestness to be learned? In life. Quite true, and the state of marriage acceptable to God offers an exceptional opportunity. Thus is earnestness learned—provided one joins the resolution with an actual conception of oneself. The resolution itself is earnestness And in order to learn earnestness from what we call the earnestness of life, earnestness is already presupposed For earnestness of life is not like a schoolmaster in relation to a pupil, but rather in the position of an indifferent power in relation to that one who must himself be something of a schoolmaster in relation to himself as pupil Otherwise one might even learn from the earnestness of life indifference to everything. We wish for guidance, and yet it holds true even in relation to this, that we must have earnestness in order to be helped by it. Or is it not evident even in relation to this exceptional guide, when he stood among us, that one hit upon many things to weaken the impression he produced, as if one were not himself the loser by this, as if it were the wisdom of the years to

become more and more fastidious, more and more inclined to reject, instead of becoming more and more judicious.

And when there is none such, what then? Aye, the world never has a lack of guides. Behold, here is a man who would guide everybody, and cannot help himself. Now one is proclaimed as wise, and admiration recognizes him as such because he cannot even understand what the common man understands. Now someone has a power of eloquence and leads astray, having the powerful works of untruth. Now what we learned in childhood has become old-fashioned, and we must learn it all over again. Now someone would tear a husband from his wife's side, make him important through participation in great enterprises, and teach him to think slightingly about the sacred vocation of marriage. Now one would tempt the wife, and teach her to sigh under the heavy yoke of matrimony. Now one dangles before the husband and wife a community fellowship that makes the marriage relation unimportant. Now one would teach the married couple to enjoy life, taking the children and therewith the cares of life away from them, so that the parents can live for higher things. And then our expectations are tensed by something extraordinary, a new order of things to come, and we all, both married and unmarried, get a vacation, like children because the school master is moving, and we are free until he gets settled. But we are no longer school children, and everyone shall give an account of himself before God, and the sacred obligation shall give every day its task and its responsibility. Where then do we find guidance if we do not work out our own soul's salvation with fear and trembling, for thus we become really earnest? Otherwise it will soon appear

that one guide cannot be followed because, although he means well, he is weak; and another not, for, though there is force and unction in what he says, they say he does not really mean it; or one is too old to satisfy the times, and another is too young. Aye, how could an address even come to an end if it tried to describe this confusion in life?

But what do you think, my hearer, of one who had the show of earnestness in rejecting everything, but not a trace of its power in possessing the least thing? What would you think of such a man if he were married, and had been married without forming a resolution, and then lived untroubled about the most sacred pledge, that is to say without seriously troubling himself about it? Had not separation already marked such a marriage, where the married couple belonged to one another, but not in earnest?

Nay, earnestness is within a man, and only a fool runs after it, and only a coward buys the indulgence of mediocrity by being like the majority, and striving after this, and only the fearful man is disturbed in a more noble striving by paying attention to the judgment of others If there is no guide in life, the earnest man still does not walk blindly. Oh, and even if the appointed guide in the place where you live, my hearer, were perhaps incompetent, well, if you will, you may be the good auditor who still profits from the incompetent address. And if he who here speaks is too young, or if he perhaps does not express himself clearly, or if his thought is perhaps confused, well then, my hearer, lay the address aside, or, if you will, do the great thing, be the reader who profits even from an unfortunate address. Verily, as there may be a power of speech which can almost perform wonders,

so there is also a power in the listener which can work wonders if he will. In such a listener there is earnestness; he says, "I wish to be edified," and lo, he is edified. But the earnestness lies in a resolution. If someone fears this, what wonder then that he seeks consolation in the fact that others are caught in the same difficulty, and look to right and left; if anyone thinks that resolution is a fragile thing, and that the resolved individual skates on thin ice, ah, what wonder then that he must always have many about him to get courage to live? But you, my hearer, believe that the resolution offers the highest happiness, that even if love's richest happiness could be secured to you in some other way for your entire life, you would still choose the life of resolution and the wedded companionship in danger. For the resolution works the miracle with marriage, as with the wedding in Cana: it first pours the poorer wine, and keeps the best for the last. And love is the best adornment for the beloved, but resolution is a power in the heart of him who is imperfect. So the resolution of marriage is that love conquers all. Aye, it conquers all; but verily it goes out in adversity, if no resolution holds it fast; it perishes in prosperity, if no resolution holds it fast, it degenerates in the daily round, if no resolution heartens it, it is smothered in conceit, if no resolution humbles it. Love abides, but the resolution is its abiding place wherein it rests; love is the refreshing essence, but resolution is the flask in which it is preserved. Love abides; it guides through life when the resolution accompanies it, but it loses its way when the resolution does not guide; it gives life significance when resolution interprets it day by day; it suffices for the whole of life, when resolution exercises its restraint; it lays hold of the eternal if the resolution has made a place for it there; it

conquers everything when the resolution is present in the day of battle—and the final honor is the only honor.

Is this kind of talk envious? Is it envious to say to the happy, "I know where you can keep your happiness secure"? A little coquettish sadness, which precisely is envy, might perhaps stir the senses of a happy man. Is this sort of speech insulting? Is it insulting to say to anyone, "I am convinced that you yourself know and have considered this, for which reason I merely remind you"? Is the speaker intrusive who stands aside and speaks half softly to himself?

And then there is required for the resolution of marriage a real conception of life and of oneself; but herein there is already contained the second great requirement, which is like the first: a real conception of God. The one corresponds to the other; for no one can have a real conception of God without having a corresponding one about life and himself, nor can he have a real conception of himself without a similar one about God, and no real conception about life without a similar one about himself. A poetically creative imagination or a conception at the distance of an indifferent contemplation, is no real conception. Nor does the conception of God come as an accidental supplement to the conception of life and of oneself; on the contrary it comes and crowns the whole, interpenetrating everything, and it was present before it became manifest.

The lovers are happy, and on the day of happiness, one is surely nearest to God. But there is required a real conception of God, there is required an understanding between God and the happy individual, and thus there is required a language in which they can speak with one another. This language is resolution, the only language

in which God wills to have intercourse with man. For if the happy individual were ever so enthusiastic in expressions of gratitude for his happiness (and where is the happy individual who does not feel this need of being grateful!) and if he even used God's name, it does not follow that he really spoke with God, had a real conception of Him, entered into an understanding with Him, and profited by the understanding. For the thanksgiving for the happiness, were it ever so remarkable, were the expression ever so filled with pathos, the soul ever so burning with zeal, God will not understand—only the resolution which takes over the happiness. And if the name of God be mentioned at the beginning and end, it does not therefore follow that one speaks with God, when the conception in which the worshipper offers his thanksgiving, is not of God, but of happiness, fortune, great profit, and other things; or about a mysterious power over whose intervention one stands amazed—and worships.

The resolution should not make the happy individual ungrateful, on the contrary it should make him worthy, and only in the resolution does gratitude become earnest. Therefore the gratitude of the resolution knows that this happiness is a task, and that the grateful individual now stands at the beginning. Hence the thanksgiving of resolution is sober-minded; it understands that God has in this happiness spoken to the resolved individual, but also understands that this is the beginning of the conversation. Is this to think deprecatingly of happiness? Is it not rather to think worthily about God? If someone talked with a wise man, and immediately upon the first words of the wise man, he interrupted him with his thanks, because he now needed no more help: what would

this show other than that he did not talk with a wise man, but with a wise man whom he himself transformed into a fool? A wise man is a human being, and so something external, and in so far someone may say with truth, even if he talked foolishly, that he had talked with a wise man; but God exists only inwardly. Whoever speaks with Him therefore, as this man did with the wise man, does not really speak with God. Just as there is an immature love that says, "True love conquers all," without having any conception of the struggle; just as there is an immature enthusiasm that says the same things with a similar rashness: so there is also an immature gratitude that would thank God, and yet only deceives itself into thinking that it thanks God, and defrauds God of the thanksgiving. The thankfulness of resolution is earnest, and therefore acceptable unto God; its thankfulness is also the good beginning by which the task is half done; and with God's help the resolution will certainly conquer all. It does not give thanks once for all, nor with earthly and deceptive self-conceit or folly; nay, the resolution is the beginning, and the thanksgiving of the resolution is the beginning of thankfulness, the beginning of the solemnity which will keep many an unnecessary danger at a distance, strengthen the soul in real danger, echo in pæans of praise on the day of victory; it is the beginning of the vigilance which will find the wedded pair preserving it in the evening of life, expectant after the wedding as the wise virgins were before the wedding, the watchfulness which will make the last thanksgiving the most beautiful, make the last response to God's voice, whose beginning was this happiness, into an acceptable and true thanksgiving.

If anyone thinks that this is nevertheless disturbing, if without really understanding himself, he ventures in

confusion of mind to think slightingly of God, if he thinks that happiness loses by becoming earnest, that the happiness was made less by being the beginning of happiness: would it then be more beautiful, would it be wiser, would it better stand the test of life, if the beginning were without resolution? Would it be more beautiful if the happiness, so to speak, immediately separated the two who were united: would it be more beautiful if a vain woman's heart listened with pleasure to the praise of an adorer who thought that he owed her all, in that, though grateful for his happiness, but confused in his thought, he knew no one else to thank for it? Or that the proud head voluptuously bent its ear to listen to the adoration of the weak, who glad in her happiness, humbled in gratitude, knew no one else to go to but to him, him to whom she owed everything and her happiness—him who defrauded her of the best life? Would it be more beautiful, would it be wiser? Would it better stand the test—even then, when the yoke must be thrown off and the struggle begin; or if this did not take place, then when the wretch never became a man, but without manly spirit went all his life tied to a woman's apron-strings? Or when the pitifully faithful woman slaved through life, not as a wife, but without frankness loved her master, and that master was her husband? Or is idolatry at first more beautiful, its foundations wiser, its progress in life more trustworthy, than a rational worship of God?

If anyone thinks that the conception of God which the resolution brings, is a check from which the happiness would rather be free: would it then be more beautiful, would it be wiser, would it better stand the test of life, if the two without a resolution were unchecked in passing the brief moment in sentimental dreaming with one

another, if they danced away the health and vigor of love on their wedding-day? Was it more beautiful, was it wiser, did it better hold on to the best in life—then, when they stood weary at the beginning of the way, and lo, the jest was over, and it was not earnestness that remained, but distaste and boredom, and a confused awakening to a long life from a confused dream of youth? Should the brief lust of a pair of sensualists be more beautiful and wiser and more trustworthy in life, than the humble beginning of a true marriage?

Is there anyone who thinks that the resolution can come later when it is really needed? So it is not needed then, not on the wedding-day, when the eternal pledge is entered into? But then, later? Can he mean that there was no thought of leaving one another, but of enjoying the first gladness of their union—and so united, of finding support in the resolution? Then when toil and trouble come, and need, be it physical or spiritual, stands at the door, then the time is there? Aye, indeed, the time is there—the time for the resolved individual to muster up his resolution; but not just the time to form a resolution. It is true that distress and failure may help a man to seek God in a resolution, but the question is whether the conception is always the right one, whether it is joyful, whether it does not have a certain wretchedness, a secret wish that it were not necessary, whether it may not be out of humor, envious, melancholy, and so no ennobling reflection of the trials of life. There is in the state a loan-association to which the indigent may apply. The poor man is helped, but I wonder if that poor man has a pleasant conception of the loan-association. And so there may also be a marriage which first sought God when in difficulty, alas, sought Him as a loan-association; and every-

one who first seeks God for the first time when in difficulties, always runs this danger. Is then such a late resolution, which even if it were a worthy one, was not without shame and not without great danger, bought at the last moment, is that more beautiful, and wiser than the resolution at the beginning of marriage?

But perhaps no distress and difficulty come in life, so that the resolution is not needed. Far be it from this address to terrify childish people, and still farther from it, to praise resolution as a means of serving something lower. Well, then, O childish one, who knows not the peril of the spirit, suppose the marriage is fortunate, that here is a marriage that life coddles, and fortune smiles upon continuously—what then? Then this childish marriage has lost the best, for the resolution itself is the best It is not a wretched invention against the misery of life, but the garment of salvation, and the resolved individual arrayed therein, worthily bears prosperity, and is strongly armored thereby to conquer in the evil day, and yet the garment is the same.

Alas, the life of marriage and the circumstances of marriage are so very different in the world, and yet there is one resolution that is, or may be common to every marriage: that love conquers all. This resolution is the beginning, and in this resolution there is contained a real conception of life and of oneself, and thereby also of God—so that the end may well be as the beginning, that love has conquered all. But imagine two marriages, my hearer. The one must wearily pursue its narrow way through many difficulties, the other is borne as on the hands of fortune through life; now they have both come to the end of life, and love has conquered all. Of the first marriage it must be said that the wedded pair learned much

in the strict school of life, but when it must also be said that in the evening of life they were not essentially different in their earnestness than when in the beginning they gained earnestness in the strict discipline of the resolution: was this not most beautiful? And if of the other couple it must be said that in the evening of life they were not essentially different in their earnestness, but had also through a long life, been essentially as earnest as when on their day of happiness, resolution had made them mature in earnestness: was not this most beautiful? For the youthful earnestness of the resolution is not formed piecemeal, but with God's help it is formed of a conception of life, and of one's self, and of God, and is therefore an eternal soundness, and perhaps never gained later in this way.

THE DECISIVENESS OF DEATH

(AT THE SIDE OF A GRAVE)

AND so it is now over! And when the person who here first approached the grave because he is the next of kin, when after the brief moment of this address, he is the last to leave the grave, because, alas, he is the nearest to the deceased, then it is over. Even if he were to remain out there, he could not learn what the dead man is doing, for the dead man is quiet; if in his anxiety he were to call his name, if in his grief he were to sit there listening, still he would learn nothing, for there is stillness in the grave, and the dead are silent; and if he went every day to the grave in remembrance, the dead man would not remember him.

For in the grave there is no remembrance, not even of God. And this was known to the man of whom it must now be said that he no longer remembers, and to whom it would now be too late to say it. But because he knew this he acted accordingly, and therefore he remembered God while he lived. His life ran its course in honorable obscurity, not many knew of his existence, only one here and there among those few knew him. He was a fellow townsman; industrious in his modest calling he disturbed no one by failing in the obligations of a citizen, nor did he disturb anyone by an unsuitable concern for the interests of society. Year after year passed thus, uneventfully but not emptily; he became a man, he became old, he became stricken in years: his work remained one and the same, one and the same occupation in the different

periods of his life. He leaves behind him a wife, formerly happy in her union with him, now an elderly widow who grieves for her loss, a widow of just feeling, who bereft now sets her hope on God. He leaves behind him a son who learned to love him and to find satisfaction in the circumstances and conditions of his father's work; once as a child happy in his father's house, as a youth he never found it too confining; now it is to him a house of mourning

Such an inconspicuous man when he dies is not widely talked about; and if someone shortly after his death walks by the house where he lived modestly, and reads his name over the door, because the business is continued under his name, it will be as if he were not dead As he passed away peaceably and quietly, so also in the outside world his death is a passing away in silence. A solid citizen, honest in his business, of frugal habits, charitable according to his means, sympathetic in sincerity, faithful to his wife, a true father to his son; all this, and all the truth with which it may be said, does not strain the expectation of a significant departure; here there is only a life and its undertakings, for which a quiet death becomes a beautiful end.—And yet he performed one more task which was performed with the same faithfulness in simplicity of heart: he remembered God. He was a man, became old and stricken in years, and then he died; but the recollection of God remained the same, a guide in all his undertakings, a quiet joy in the devout contemplation. Aye, if no one missed him in his death, if he were not now with God, then God would miss him in life, know his home and seek him out, for the deceased walked before Him and was better known by Him than by anyone else. He remembered God, and became efficient in his task and

was happy in his labor, and found joy in life; he remembered God, and was happy in his modest home with his dear ones; he disturbed no one's peace of mind by indifference to the public worship, nor confused anyone by untimely zeal, but the house of God was his second home —and now he is gone home.

But in the grave there is no remembrance—therefore it remains behind, remains in the hearts of the two who were dear to him in life: they will remember him. And when the one who was first to approach the grave because he was the next of kin, after the brief moment of the address, remains last at the grave because he is next of kin, when he remembering goes away, he goes home to the sorrowing widow: and the name over the door becomes a memory. And for some time there will now and then come a customer who accidentally or more sympathetically asks about the former owner, and when he hears about his death, the customer will say, "So he is dead!" And when all the old customers have done this once, then the life of the environment has no further means of preserving his memory. But the aged widow will need no reminder to stir her memory, and the industrious son will not find it hampering to remember. And so when no one any longer asks concerning him, the name over the door will, nevertheless, when the house is no longer visibly a house of mourning, and when also within the house the grief has become milder, and the daily sense of loss with the daily consolation has impressed the memory deeply upon the mind: then the name over the door will mean for the two survivors that they have one additional task—to remember the departed.

Now the address is over. Only one act remains to be done: with the three handfuls of earth to dedicate the

deceased, like everything that has come from the earth, to the earth again—and then it is over.

The unofficial address cannot thus make the occasion earnest; no dead person waits upon it, in order that all may be over. But you may nevertheless, my hearer, wish to pay attention to the address. For death has its own earnestness; and this does not lie in the external event, —that now again a man is dead, any more than the distinction of earnestness lies in the fact that there were many carriages; aye, no more than the gentler mood which desires only to speak well of the dead, is earnest, or could in the least degree satisfy him who thinks about his own death in earnest. Death can precisely teach us that earnestness is in the inward man, in the thought; teach us that it is only an illusion when we frivolously or in melancholy look only upon the outward aspect, or when the observer profoundly forgets, over the thought of death, to think and consider his own death. If one desires to mention a really serious subject, one names death, and the "earnest thought of death," and yet it is as if there were a jest underlying the conception of death, and this jest variously expressed in a variety of moods and expressions, is the essential in every contemplation of death, where the individual does not himself come face to face with death, thinking himself in connection with his own death.

A pagan has said that death is nothing to be feared, for "when it is, I am not, and when I am, it is not." This is the jest through which the subtle observer places himself outside. But even if the conception used pictures of horror to delineate death and terrified a sick imagination, it is still only a jest if the individual merely thinks about death, and not about himself in death, if he thinks

about it only as the fate of the human race, but not as his own fate. The jest is that this invincible power cannot get its victim on the hip, and that, therefore, there is the contradiction that death, as it were, cheats itself. For sorrow, if you wish to compare it with death, and if you wish to call sorrow an archer, as death is called, sorrow does not miss its mark, for it strikes home upon the living, and when it has hit him, the sorrow begins; but when the arrow of death has struck, then it is over. And sickness, if you wish to compare death with sickness, and call it a snare as death is the snare in which life is caught: sickness really enmeshes, and when it has ensnared the well man, the illness begins; but when death draws the snare together, it has caught nothing, for then it is over. But it is precisely in this that the earnestness of death consists, and it is herein different from the earnestness of life, which so easily permits a man to deceive himself. For when someone goes bent under failure, suffering, illness, misunderstanding, straitened circumstances, scant prospects, he makes a mistake if he concludes directly from this that he is earnest; for earnestness is not the direct reflection of experience, but the ennobled reflection. That is, here again it is the internal and the thought and the appropriation which constitute the earnestness.

Or when a man is busy with widespread plans, perhaps has many warriors to command, perhaps, many books to write, perhaps has many children, perhaps occupies a high position, or must needs often put himself in peril of his life, or has the serious occupation of preparing corpses for burial—then one errs if one concludes immediately that such a one is earnest, for earnestness is in the impression, in the inward man, not in the occupation. Death, on the contrary, is not in this sense something

real; and when a man is dead it is too late for him to become earnest, and when one meets a sudden death, which a more serious age regarded as a great misfortune (for which reason it was also mentioned in the old prayer-book), but which the modern age regards as desirable, then one is helped. The earnestness of life is serious, and yet there is no seriousness except in the ennoblement of the outward fact by the consciousness, wherein lies the *possibility of a deception;* the earnestness of death is without deception, for it is not death that is earnest, but the thought of death.

When therefore, my hearer, you desire to hold the thought fast, and in no other way concern yourself with the contemplation of death except through thinking about yourself, then the unofficial address will become, through your own effort, a serious matter. To think oneself dead is earnestness; to witness the death of another, is a mood. There is the light touch of sadness when a passerby is a father who carries his child for the last time, when he carries it to the grave; or when the cheap hearse is driven by, and you know nothing about the deceased except that he was a human being. There is sadness when youth and health become the prey of death, when many years later the image of one who was beautiful, can be seen on the ruined monument, the plot grown up to weeds; there is an earnestness of mood when death invades the sphere of the vain activities, and lays hold of the foolish woman dressed in her vainest finery, or the fool in his vainest moment; there is a sigh over the mockery of life when the deceased had given a certain promise, and through no fault of his own, became a deceiver, since he had forgotten that death is the only certainty.

There is a longing after the eternal when death has taken and taken again, and has finally taken the last of the distinguished men you knew; there is a feverish heat in sickness of soul, or its cold burning, when anyone becomes so familiar with death and with the loss of his nearest and dearest, that life for him becomes a vexation of spirit. It is sheer sorrow when the deceased was yours; it is the birth-pangs of an immortal hope when it was your beloved; it is the trembling breaking-forth of earnestness when it was your only counsellor, and solitude lays hold of you; but if it were your child or your beloved, or your only guide in life, it is still a mood; and even if you would gladly die instead of them, this, too, is a mood. The earnestness consists in the fact that it is death that you think, and then that you think it as your own lot, and then that you do what death cannot do, so that you are and death also is. For death is the teacher of earnestness, but its earnest instruction is to be recognized precisely by the fact that death leaves the individual to search out himself, so as to learn earnestness as it can be learned only in and through the man himself. Death attends to its task in life; it does not run about, as in the conception of the timorous, sharpening the scythe and scaring women and children, as if this were earnestness. No, it says, "I exist; if anyone wishes to learn from me, let him come to me." Only in this manner does death engage the mind in earnestness; otherwise, only in a stimulation of moods, through the ingenuity of the thought, through its profundity, or jestingly in the play of high spirits, or downcast in deep grief, which even in its most suffering expression is still not earnestness, for earnestness would teach how to moderate the grief and the complaint.

A poet has told of a youth who, during the night be-

tween the old year and the new, dreamed that he was an old man, and as such in the dream looked back upon a wasted life, until he awoke in anguish on the morning of the new year, not merely to a new year but to a new life: thus to think of death when awake, to think of what is even more decisive than advanced age, which also has its time, to think: it was over, that all was lost with the loss of life in order then in life to gain everything—that is earnestness. There was once an emperor who had himself buried with observance of all external rites. His action was perhaps only a mood, but to witness one's own death, to see the casket closed, to note how everything which in worldly and earthly fashion appeals to the senses, ceases in death—that is earnestness. It is the lot of every human being to die, and thus a very humble art, but to be able to die well is the highest wisdom of life. Where is the difference? The difference is that in the one case the earnestness is that of death, in the other, that of the mortal And the address which draws the distinction cannot be directed to the dead but to the living

The address will deal with the subject.

THE DECISIVENESS OF DEATH

In one thing, my hearer, we agree, namely that a religious address should never be divisive, or be in disagreement with anything other than that which is irreligious Thus when the poor man, a servant, who must carefully arrange to use the few hours of his rare holiday goes out to the grave of a departed friend or kinsman, and also to consider his own death, and when such a one must help himself as best he can, then the excursion becomes a pleasure trip, and the visit there a happy and beneficent diversion from the many days of labor. So the time passes,

now in remembering the deceased, now in earnest thinking about himself, now in enjoying the freedom of the holiday and the beauty of the surroundings, as if one had come to seek refreshment in a beautiful bit of landscape, as if the journey was one of pleasure alone, and food had been brought for the common enjoyment: in that case we are agreed, that such a one in his noble simplicity beautifully combines contradictions (which according to the wise is supposed to be highly difficult), so that his remembrance is precious to the deceased, is accepted with joy in heaven, and his earnestness is quite as praiseworthy, equally acceptable to God, and equally profitable to himself, as is his who devoted rare talents in schooling himself in death's earnest thought day and night, so that he was checked again and again from pursuing the vain ambition, so that he was impelled again and again to hasten forward on the good way; now was weaned from being gossipy and fussily busy in life, in order to learn wisdom in silence; now learned not to fear hobgoblins and human inventions, but rather the responsibility of death; now learned not to fear them who merely kill the body, but to fear for himself and for having his life in vanity, in the moment in illusion.

We praise such a man for having gloriously utilized the opportunity afforded him, but if he sometimes took a holiday from the glorious task, to find pleasure in the thought that he was better than the simple man who neither had so much time nor such gifts; more acceptable to God, as if God did wrong in denying to the one time and talents and the gift of fortune, and then, as men are sometimes cruel in thoughtlessness, making the lack of these a fault. Alas, what a difference between his rare holiday and that of the simple man, when he forfeits everything,

and the simple man gains everything! Nay, all comparison is merely a jest, and a vain comparison a sorry jest. Even if our favored individual had plenty of time, earnestness and death would nevertheless teach him that he had no time to waste, much less any time to forfeit everything. If anyone, on the contrary, had quickly disposed of the thought of death, as of all other thoughts, and was perhaps concerned lest in this poor and monotonous life there should not be enough for such a rapid thinker to think about, then we are agreed, my hearer, that the peculiarity of every subject when it becomes the object of religious contemplation is this, that the plain man is quickly assisted to a profitable understanding, and that the most gifted man gladly uses an entire lifetime, even if he admits that he has not entirely understood it, or quite perfectly made application of the thought in his life. For whoever is without God in the world soon becomes tired of himself, and expresses this loftily by being bored with life; but he who has fellowship with God lives with One whose presence gives even the most insignificant an infinite significance.

Of the decisiveness of death it must first be said that it is *decisive*. The repetition of the word is significant, the repetition itself reminds us of how chary of words death is. There are many other decisions in life, but only one is decisive in the manner of death. For all the energies of life cannot check the course of time. It carries them along with it, and even memory is in the present. And the living individual does not have it in his power to bring about a pause, to find repose outside time in a perfect finality—in a finality of happiness as if there were no tomorrow, in a finality of grief as if it could not become a drop more bitter, in a finality of contemplation

as if the meaning were quite complete and the contemplation again not a part of the meaning, in a finality of accounting as if the accounting itself did not have its own responsibility. Death, on the other hand, has this power; it does not dabble at it, as if something still remained; it does not pursue the decision as does the living; it makes earnest of it. When death comes, it makes pronouncement, "Thus far, not one step farther." Then it is finished, and not a letter may be added; the meaning is complete, not another sound is to be heard—it is over. If it is impossible to combine all the pronouncements about life made by the innumerable hosts of the living, the dead all unite in a single pronouncement, in one single word to the living—"Stand still!" If it is impossible to unite all the pronouncements of the innumerable hosts of the living about their striving in life, all the dead unite in saying one single thing, "Now it is over."

Lo, this is what death can do. Nor is death an inexperienced youth, who has not yet learned to use his scythe, so that someone might be able to disconcert him. Have any conception you like about your life, its importance to everyone, its importance to yourself: death has no conception and gives attention to none. Oh, if anyone has a right to be weary of repetition, then surely death who has seen everything, and again and again the same. Even the death infrequent in a century he has seen many times. But no one has ever seen death change color, seen him shaken by the experience, seen the scythe tremble in his hand, seen even the suspicion of a change of mien in his calm visage. Nor has death become an old man who, weakened by age, falters hesitantly, who does not know precisely what time it is, or who has become compassionate through weakness. Oh, if anyone may boast of remaining

unchanged, then surely death; he becomes neither paler nor older.

And yet it is not the purpose of the address to eulogize death, nor does it propose merely to engage the imagination. That death can put an end to things is certain; but the challenge of earnestness to the living is to think this, to think that it is over, that there will come a time when it is past. This is difficult; for even in the moment of death it seems to the dying that he might have some time yet to live, and we fear even to say to him that it is over. And now the living, so long as he lives, perhaps in health, in youth, in good fortune, in power and thus secure, aye, very secure, unless he is willing to lock himself in with the thought of death, which explains to him that this security is an illusion. There is a comfort in life, a false flatterer, there is a guarantee in life, a hypocritical deceiver. He is named procrastination. But he is hardly ever called by his right name, for even when one names him he contrives to insinuate himself into the word, and the name becomes less severe, and the milder name is also a procrastination. But there is no one who can so teach one to abhor the flatterer and to see through the deceiver as the earnest thought of death. For death and procrastination do not agree, they are mortal enemies; but the earnest man knows that death is the stronger.

It is over And if it were a child with a claim to a long life, if it wept for itself—now it is over, not a moment is conceded. If it were a youth with his beautiful hopes, if he begged for himself but a single one of them—now it is over, not a penny is paid him on his claims to life. If a little were lacking in an author's praiseworthy work, and if this work were a miracle of achievement, and if all mankind would misunderstand it because the conclusion

was lacking—now it is over, the work not entirely finished. If there were a single word which had been for him the significance of his life, and if he would give an entire life to dare to say it—now it is over, the word was not uttered.

In the decision of death it is thus over, there is rest; nothing, nothing disturbs the dead; if this little word, if that lacking moment, made the death struggle restless, now the dead man is not disturbed. If the suppression of the little word confused the life of many living, if the mysterious work again and again engaged the attention of the inquiring scholar, the dead man is not disturbed. The decisiveness of death is thus like a night, the night which comes when no man can work. And death has also been called a night, and the conception of it made milder by calling it a sleep. And it is supposed to be alleviating for the living, when sleepless he vainly seeks rest upon his bed, when fleeing from himself he vainly seeks a hiding-place where consciousness may not discover him, when suffering and weary in body and soul he vainly seeks a position in which there is alleviation of his pain, when he cannot stand still for the restlessness of his pain, and cannot walk for faintness, until he sinks down, and then, with new exertion, vainly seeks a restful position, vainly seeks coolness in this heat: then it is supposed to be soothing to think that there is at least one position in which the struggling body finds repose—it is death's; one sleep which does not flee the sleeper, the sleep of death; one cool place, the grave; one hiding-place where consciousness is left outside, the grave, where even memory itself remains outside like a light breeze through the trees; one blanket that the quiet sleeper does not throw off, and under which he sleeps calmly, the greensward!

It is supposed to be soothing, when one has already become weary in youth and sadness starts to nurse the child, then to consider that in the bosom of mother earth there is a warm and cozy resting place. It is supposed to be soothing thus to consider this consolation, and to think it in such a manner that the Eternal at last becomes the unfortunate individual who, like a nurse, may not sleep while all the rest of us fall asleep!

But, my hearer, this is a mood, and to think death in this manner is not to think it earnestly. It is the flight from life of a melancholy temperament thus to long for death, and it is rebellion to propose in this manner not to fear death; it is the deceptiveness of sadness to refuse to understand that there are other things to fear than life, and that there must therefore be some wisdom that comforts, other than the sleep of death. Verily, if it is weak to fear death, then it is also an affectation of courage which imagines that it does not fear death when the same individual fears life; it is effeminate sluggishness which seeks a bed, effeminately seeking consolation in sleep, effeminately seeking to sleep one's self away from suffering.

Death is indeed a sleep, and we shall say of everyone who rests in death that he sleeps; we shall say of the dead that a silent night overshadows them, and that nothing disturbs their peace. But is there no difference between life and death; must not the living individual who thinks his own death conceive it otherwise? If it were yourself, and you the living individual who saw it! He who sleeps in death does not show flushed cheeks as the child does in sleep; he does not gather new strength like the man who is refreshed; the dream does not pay him its friendly visit, as it visits the aged in his sleep! When in life you

see a case resembling death, what do you do? You cry out to the person in a faint because you shudder to see this condition where the state of death belongs to one living. Is it then so comforting that the reason you do not cry out to the dead is because it cannot help? But you are indeed not dead, and if melancholy tries to strengthen you by means of a swoon, and if sadness proposes to let you faint in a deathlike languor which finds its only consolation in the sleep of death, then cry out, call upon yourself, do for yourself what you would do for anyone else, and do not seek a deceptive comfort in wishing that it was all over! Have whatever conception you please, true or imaginary, of the remarkable character of your sufferings. If anyone has a right to be weary of the repetition of the cry of complaint, then surely death; even one so unfortunate that his sufferings stand out through the centuries, even his cry death has heard many times, but no one, no one has even hinted that it moved death to come faster! And if your cry could move him—is it really your intention, or is it not rather that the contradiction, that he does not come because you call him, strengthens the defiant self-assurance; is it not the contradiction that helps the fearful play the brave game with the terrible figure of death—if then your cry and your longing moved him, would you not have deceived yourself, even if for a moment we forget the responsibility which always remains? What was it that soothed you? Was it the fact that it was over, or was not the conception, as this still remained in the power of your melancholy or your sadness, and thus also in the power of the living—a diversion, a plaything! He who sleeps in death does not move, and even if the casket did not fit so strait about him, still he does not move; he returns to dust. And the thought

that it is over, which in the imaginary anticipation of the conception refreshed in melancholy and defiant impotence, or triflingly soothed in sadness, this conception is not there with him. He has therefore no joy from the fact that it is over; why then did he wish it so much? How great the contradiction! Say then, if you can, that it is so comforting to be the prey of corruption in the ground. But if you know something about death, then you also know how to fear something other than life.

Earnestness understands indeed the same thing about death, but understands it otherwise. It understands that it is over. That this may be expressed in a milder manner by saying that death is a night, a sleep, interests it less. Earnestness does not waste much time in guessing riddles, it does not sit sunk in contemplation, it does not seek paraphrases for the expression, it does not consider the ingenuity of the metaphors, it does not discuss It acts If it is certain that death exists, as it is; if it is certain that *all is over in its finality, if it is certain* that death itself never pretends to offer any explanation, well, then, the task remains of reaching an understanding with oneself, and the earnest understanding is that if death is a night, then life is a day, and if it is not possible to labor in the night, then it is possible to work while it is day; and the brief but stimulating cry of earnestness is like death's brief cry: yet today. For when conceived in earnestness death gives energy to live as nothing else does; it makes a man awake and watchful as nothing else does. Death makes the sensuous man say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." But this is the cowardly joy of the life of sensuality, this despicable order of things where one lives in order to eat and drink, instead of eating and drinking in order to live. Upon the more profound man

the conception of death may perhaps produce a sense of impotence, so that he sinks down relaxed in mood; but to the earnest man the thought of death gives the right impetus to life, and the right goal toward which he directs his speed. And no bowstring can be drawn so tight, and can so speed the arrow, as the thought of death can hasten the living forward when earnestness tenses the bow. Then earnestness lays hold of the present yet today, contemns no task as too humble, rejects no time as too short, labors with the utmost exertion, though it is willing to smile at itself if this exertion were to be reckoned a merit before God, and it is willing in its impotence to understand that a human being is absolutely nothing, and that he who labors with all his might, merely finds a better opportunity to wonder over God. Time is also a good. If a human being had the power to create a scarcity in the material world, he would indeed find much to do; for the merchant says rightly enough that though each article has its price, this price depends so much on favorable circumstances, and when there is a time of scarcity, the merchant earns larger profits. In the material world a human being is perhaps unable to produce this effect, but in the world of the spirit everyone can do it. Death itself produces scarcity of time for the dying; who has not heard how a single day, sometimes an hour, attained infinite value because death made time dear? This, death can do, but the earnest man is able by means of the thought of death, to produce a period of scarcity, so that the year and the day become infinitely valuable. And when time is scarce the merchant profits by making use of time. But when the public security is jeopardized, the merchant does not accumulate his profits indifferently, but he keeps watch over his treasure lest thieves break in

and take it from him. And death is also like a thief in the night.

Is it not true, my hearer, and have you not experienced this yourself? And when the thought of death visited you, but made you inactive; when it wormed itself into your mind and beguiled the life-energy within you with sentimental dreams; when the despondency of death made your life vanity; when that seducer sadness skulked about you; when the conception that everything was over wished to stupefy you in the sleep of melancholy; when you lost yourself in preoccupation with the images of death; then you did not blame death for this, for all this was not death. But you said to yourself, "My soul is in the power of mood, and if it continues too long, there is in it an enmity to myself, which may acquire the ruling power." You did not flee death as if such flight were the remedy. Far from it. You said, "I will evoke the earnest thought of death." And it helped you. For the earnestness of death has helped to make a last hour infinitely significant, its earnest thought has helped to make a long life significant as in a time of scarcity, secure as if from the attack of thieves.

Let death then keep its power, "that it is over"; but let life also keep the right to labor while it is day; and let the earnest man seek the thought of death as an assistance to this end. The fickle-minded man is merely a witness to the constant border warfare between life and death, his life is merely doubt's reflection of the relationship, the outcome of his life is a delusion; but the serious man has entered into a treaty of friendship with the opposing forces, and his life has in death's earnest thought the most faithful of allies. If there is, then, one likeness for the dead, that it is over, there is nevertheless one difference, my hearer. A difference that cries aloud to heaven, the

difference in what kind of life it was, which now with death is over. And so it is not over, and in spite of all the terrors of death, supported by the earnest thought of death, the earnest man may say, "It is not over." But if this bright prospect tempts him, if he merely catches a glimmering of it in the faint light of contemplation, if it takes him away from the task, if time does not become precious as in a period of scarcity, if his possessions are secure, then again he is not in earnest. If death says, "Perhaps yet today," then earnestness says, "Whether perhaps it be today or not, I still say, 'Yet today.' "

Of the finality of death it must next be said that it is indeterminable. Herein nothing has been said, but so it must be when we speak in riddles. It is indeed true that death makes all equal, but if this equality is in nothing, in annihilation, then the equality itself is indeterminable. If anything more were to be said about this equality, this can only be done by naming the differences of life, and denying them in the equality of death. Here in the grave, the child and one who transformed a world are equally inactive, here the rich man is as poor as the poor man; poverty does not beg; the rich man has nothing to give, the most contented and the most insatiable in desire need equally little; here the voice of the conqueror is not heard, nor the cry of the oppressed; here the arrogant and the injured become equally powerless; here they lie side by side and tolerate one another, they whom enmity had separated in the world; here lies the beautiful, and here lies the wretched, but beauty no longer sets a bar between them; here they both lie, he who searched for death as for a secret treasure, and he who had forgotten that there was such a thing as death, but the difference cannot be discerned.

Thus the finality of death is through its equality like an empty space, and as a silence in which no sound is heard, or softened as a silence which nothing disturbs. And in this silent kingdom, death is the ruler. Although only one against all the living, he is nevertheless mighty to bring them under subjection to himself, and to enforce silence upon them. Whatever idea you may have about your life, aye, even of its significance for the eternal, you cannot talk yourself out of the clutches of death, you cannot make the transition to the eternal in a rush of words and with a single breath; they have all been silenced. And even if the generations were to unite noisily in common enterprises, and if the individual forgot himself and found himself secure in the shelter of the multitude, death takes each one separately, and he becomes silent. Have whatever conception you wish about the distinctions of the living, death makes him the equal of him who was indistinguishable by his difference. For the mirror of life sometimes reflects back to the vain man his difference with a flattering faithfulness, but the mirror of death does not flatter; its faithfulness shows all as equal, and they all resemble one another, when death with his mirror has verified that the dead man is silent.

Thus the finality of death is indeterminate through its equality, for the equality is in annihilation. And to think about this is supposed to be assuaging for the living. When the spirit, weary of the differences which persist and persist and have no end, proudly withdraws into itself, and gathers wrath in defiance of its impotence, because it cannot check the vitality of the differences: then it is supposed to be alleviating to consider that death has this power, then this conception is supposed to kindle the enthusiasm of annihilation into a glow in which there is

supposed to be a heightened life.—When a wretched being sits and sighs in his corner because life wronged him like a stepmother, when disfigured and deformed he scarcely dares to show himself because even the best of men involuntarily smile at his agonizing and yet ridiculous misery, when thus excluded in an isolated retreat, he cannot love because no one cares for a match with him, which he vainly seeks like others: then it is supposed to be an alleviation, like the coolness of snow on the fire of his secret resentment, to consider that death makes all equal.—When he whose right has been violated writhes under the wrong of the mighty, and his hate in its impotence despairs of its revenge: then it is supposed to be a welcome consolation which almost revives the joy of life, to recall that death makes all equal.—When the voluptuary sits inactive and indulges in wishful thinking about himself, but only sees others strive and attain greatness, when thus the passion of impatience oppresses the breathing of the voluptuary: then it is supposed to be alleviating, to give air, to consider that death cancels everything and makes all equal.—When the loser understood indeed that the strife was over and that he was the weaker, but at the same time understands that it is not over, that his defeat gave to the victor the impetus of fortune, so that his suffering in the aftermath of his defeat is everyday, but more and more remote, the information of the other's rise to new heights in the distance: then it is supposed to be soothing to consider that death will overtake him and reduce the difference between them to nothing.—When illness becomes the daily guest, and time passes, the time of happiness, when even the nearest of kin become weary of the sufferer, and many an impatient word inflicts its wound, when the sufferer himself feels that his

mere presence is disturbing to pleasure, so that he must sit apart from the dancing: then it is supposed to be alleviating to consider that death invites him also to the dance, and in that dance all are equal.

But, my hearer, these are moods; and it is really cowardice which reveals itself in them, which by deceptive speech in poetic dress deems itself better, though it is in essence equally wretched. For even if the simple is perhaps unable to understand this sort of mood, is this distinction in and for itself a decisive value, is it not decisive merely in making it more responsible? It is the cowardly inclination of melancholy to wish itself into giddy emptiness, and thereby find in this giddiness its last diversion; it is envy in rebellion against God to risk harm to one's soul, wounded by the differences of life; it is a self-accusation to hate in impotence, betraying that one merely lacks the power, since one makes so terrible a misuse of one's impotence; it is a despicable short-cut to an unjustified complaint against life merely to wish, and then to complain, because one did not become what one wished, and never became good for anything else than wishing, and finally became wretched enough to wish everything away; it is the persistent self-torture of the defeated to refuse to recognize anything higher than the strife between you and me, and the final destruction of us both; it is a still more terrible disease to refuse to understand what healer it is that the sick man needs. Verily if it is cowardice and voluptuous effeminacy not even in thought to dare renounce the differential privilege, and to lose one's life in it, then it is also a pretended courage which would experiment with the idea of death's equality, when the same man sighs and gasps for breath under the differences of life.

And if it were really someone's intent—would it not be the contradiction that he is still living, which gives the presumptuous venture its allure?—To seek in this manner a consolation in the equality of death, would his conception of death hold good in death, that is, when the business of thought no longer gave pleasure to the passions? The dead man has forgotten the difference; and even if through life he had proposed to remember it, in order to have the joy of seeing it taken away from another in death, this thought is not with him, even if for a moment we forget the responsibility that remains. This is the falsehood and the deception in the presumptuous defiance that seeks to conspire with death against life. It is forgotten that death is the strongest; it is forgotten that it is without partiality, that it makes covenant with none, to let him in death obtain scope and liberty to enjoy the pleasure of annihilation. Only when the conception of the living fantastically wanders about in the silent kingdom of the dead, theatrically itself plays the role of death, and vanishes itself in death; only when the conception of the living plays death and imitates his function, calls the envied one before him, divests him of all his glory and rejoices in his impotence, only when the conception journeys out to the graves, presumptuously digs its spade into the ground, violates the peace of the dead with its defiant passion, rejoices to see that the remains of one wholly resemble the remains of another—only then is there alleviation.

But all such things are not earnestness; and however dark its nature, and however gloomy the amusement, still it is not earnestness. For earnestness does not present a scowling face, but is reconciled to life, and knows how to fear death.

Earnestness understands the same thing about death, but understands it otherwise. It understands that death makes all equal; and this is something that it has already understood because its earnestness has taught it to seek equality before God, in which all may be equal. And in this effort the earnest man discovers a difference, namely, his own distance from the goal that is set before him, and discovers that farthest from the goal would be a condition like the equality of death. But every time the earthly difference would tempt him, would delay him, the earnest thought of death and its equality is interposed, and again impels him forward. Just as no evil spirit dares to name the holy name, so every good spirit shudders at the empty space, the equality of annihilation, and this trembling, which in the life of nature is productive, is quickening in the life of the spirit. Oh, how often did not the equality of annihilation teach a man when death came to him, to wish even the difference heaviest to bear back again, to find the condition of his life desirable, now that the condition of death was the only one offered him! And in this manner the earnest thought of death has taught the living to interpenetrate even the heaviest difference with the thought of equality before God. And no comparison has so impulsive a power, nor gives the hastening individual so surely the right direction, as when the living man compares himself with the equality of death. And if, of all comparisons, that is the most vain when a man contemns every other comparison in order to compare himself with himself in self-complacency, aye, if no vain woman ever stood so vainly surrounded by admiration as when she stood alone before her mirror: oh, then there is no comparison so earnest as his, who, alone, compares himself with the equality of death! Alone; for this is also a conse-

quence of the equality of death, when the grave is closed, when the gate is locked upon the cemetery, when the night falls and he lies alone, far from all sympathy, unrecognizable, in a form which can only arouse a shudder, alone out there where the multitude of the dead creates no society. Death has indeed been able to overthrow thrones and principalities, but the earnest thought of death has been able to accomplish what is quite as great, has helped the earnest man to subject the most privileged difference under the humble equality before God, and has helped him to raise himself above the heaviest difference in humble equality before God.

Is it not true, my hearer, and have you not yourself experienced it thus? And when your soul went astray in the enjoyment of privilege, and when you could hardly recognize yourself because of the magnificence, then the earnest thought of death made you unrecognizable in another manner, and you learned to know yourself, and to will to be known of God. Or if your soul sighed under the difficult yoke of sufferings and frustrations, of injuries, of a melancholy mind, alas, and it seemed to you that the restrictions would last as long as life, then, when the tempter also came to your house (you know him, the tempter whom a man has in his own inner self, who fraudulently transmits greetings from others), and when he first portrayed to you the happiness of others until you became despondent, and then he proposed to give you reparation: then you did not yield yourself to the mood. You said, "It is a rebellion against God, enmity against myself"; and then you said, "I will evoke the earnest thought of death." And it helped you to overcome the difference, to find equality before God, to will to express the difference. For the equality of death is terrible be-

cause nothing can withstand it (how comfortless!); but the equality before God is blessed because nothing can prevent it if the man himself does not will it. And is the difference in life so very great! For take the happy man, let him rejoice in his good fortune; when you, the unfortunate, were made glad again in his happiness, then are you not both glad? Take the distinguished man, let him rejoice in his distinction; when you, the injured, have forgotten the injury, and now see the merits he displays, was the difference so great? Take the young man, let him hasten forward with the trustworthiness of hope, when you, though disappointed in life, perhaps even secretly gave him support, was the difference then so great? Oh, fortune and honor and wealth and beauty and power, these are the things which constitute the differences; but if the only difference is that the happiness and honor and wealth and beauty and power of the one is a garden-plant, that of the other a blossom on a grave, cultivated in the consecrated soil of self-denial, is the difference so great? They are both happy and honored and rich and beautiful and powerful. Ah, no, in that case one needs no reparation, least of all one which falsely keeps silent about the fact that one becomes nothing. However hard the difference, the earnest thought of the equality of death, like a strict upbringing, helped you to renounce all worldly comparison, to understand annihilation as still more fearful, and to will to seek the equality before God.

The equality of death was not permitted to enchant you with its magic; nor is there time for this For as the finality of death is indeterminate in its equality, it is equally indeterminate in its inequality. Who has not often heard that death makes no distinction, that it knows no class and no age; who has not himself considered, when

he thought over the very dissimilar conditions of the living, and proposed to think of death in relation to these, that the conclusion was reached that it could just as well seek its prey here as there, just as well, because it regards nothing, while all differences consist in having regard for something. Thus is death indeterminate in its dissimilarity. It almost forestalls life, and the child is born dead; it lets the aged wait from year to year; when one says peace and safety, it stands over one, and it is sometimes sought in vain in the perils of life, while it finds him who hides himself in a corner; when the barns are full, and there is provision enough for a long life, then death comes and demands the rich man's soul, and when there is want, death remains away; when the hungry man in anxious care wonders what he shall have to eat tomorrow, death comes and takes the cares of life away from him, and when the voluptuous man, overgorged, worries over what he shall eat on the morrow, death comes in judgment and makes his worry superfluous.

In this way death is indeterminate: the one thing certain, and the only thing about which nothing is certain. This conception allures the thought out into the changes of the indeterminate in order to experiment with this strange shudder as if it were a game, to guess this strange riddle, to give oneself up to the inexplicable vanishing and the equally inexplicable appearance of the sudden. It is supposed to be soothing to think about this chance, this even and odd, this hint of a law in the lawless, which is and which is not, is in relation to all the living, and which is indeterminable in its every relation. When the soul wearies of necessity and law, of the determinate and of the scanty measure of the determinate task, and of the consciousness that more and more is being neglected;

when the energy of the will has been dissipated, and the exhausted one becomes like rotten wood; when curiosity, weary of life, seeks a more manifold task for its curiosity: then it might be entertaining to consider the indeterminateness of death, and soothing thus to become familiar with the thought. Now one wonders over one case of death, now over another, now one talks oneself giddy by speaking in general terms of what escapes the general determination, now one is in one mood, now in another, now sad, now dauntless, now mocking, now connecting death with the happiest moment as the greatest happiness, now as the greatest unhappiness, now wishing a sudden death, now a slow one, now disputing over which death is the more desirable, now one becomes tired of the whole reflection, and forgets death until the wheel of deliberation is again set in motion and shakes the items of deliberation together into new combinations for new wonder—ah, alas, until the thought of one's own death evaporates in a mist before the eyes, and the reminder of one's own death becomes an indeterminate murmur in the ear. This is the alleviation of the familiar in the contemplation of the blunted mind, namely, that it is so once for all, in the uplifting impersonal forgetfulness which forgets itself over the whole, or rather forgets itself in thoughtlessness, by which one's own death becomes one more curious incident among these manifold incalculable incidents, and the superannuation a preparation to make one's own passing in death easy.

But even if such a life, by considering all the strangeness of death, underwent all possible moods, is the contemplation thereof earnest? Does the multiplicity of mood always end in earnestness? Should not the beginning of earnestness rather prevent this prolixity, in which the

contemplative spirit neglects life and becomes as one who is addicted to gambling when he ponders and ponders, and dreams about numbers by night, instead of working by day? Whoever considers death in this manner is in a condition of stupor with respect to his spiritual life; he enervates his consciousness so that it cannot endure the earnest impression of the inexplicable, so that he cannot in earnestness yield himself to the impression and then also master the mysterious.

Death is indeed strange, but only earnestness can determine it. Whence comes this confusion of thoughtlessness, if not from the fact that the thought of the individual ventures contemplatively out in life, would view the whole of existence, this play of forces which only God in heaven can calmly consider, because in His providence He controls it with His wise and omnipresent purpose, but which enfeebles a man's spirit and makes him weak, causes him unnecessary sorrow, and strengthens him with regrettable consolation. Unnecessary sorrow, namely, in mood, because he concerns himself with so much, regrettable consolation, namely, in a relaxed dullness, when his contemplation has so many ways in and out that at last it loses its way. And when death comes, it deceives the contemplative mind, since all his contemplation did not bring the explanation one step nearer, but only cheated him out of his life.

Earnestness understands the same thing about death, that it is indeterminate by virtue of its unlikeness, that no age and no circumstances and no situation in life is secure against it, but then it understands it otherwise, and it understands itself. Behold, the axe is already laid at the root of the tree, every tree that does not bear good fruit shall be cut down—nay, every tree shall be cut down,

including the tree that bears good fruit. The certainty is that the axe is laid at the root of the tree; even if you did not notice that death walks over your grave and that the axe moves, the uncertainty is there in every moment, the uncertainty when the blow will fall—and the tree. But when it has fallen, then it is already decided whether it bore good fruit or rotten fruit.

The earnest man considers himself; if he is young, the thought of death teaches him that it is a young man who here becomes its prey, if it comes today, but he does not indulge in silly generalities about youth as the prey of death. The earnest man considers himself, and he knows therefore the condition of that one who would here become the prey of death, if it came today; he considers his own activity, and therefore knows what kind of work would be broken off, if death came today. Thus the game ceases, thus the riddle is solved. The general contemplation of death only confuses the thought, as experiences in general always do. The certainty of death is the earnestness, its uncertainty is the instruction, the training in earnestness; the earnest man is that one who by means of the uncertainty is schooled in earnestness by virtue of the certainty. For how does a man learn earnestness? Does he perhaps learn it by having a wise man dictate something to him for him to learn? By no means If you have not yourself thus learned from an earnest man, then imagine how it goes The learner concerns himself (for without concern, no learner) about one or another subject with his whole soul, and in this way the certainty of death is indeed a subject for concern Now the deeply concerned individual appeals to the teacher of earnestness; and this is what death is, not a scarecrow, except in the imagination. The learner desires this or that, he proposes to do it

so and so, and under these presuppositions he says, "Then I shall succeed, shall I not?" But the earnest man does not reply, and finally with the calm of earnestness, yet without mockery, he says, "Aye, it is possible." Now the learner becomes a little impatient; he outlines a new plan, changes the presuppositions, and concludes in a still more pressing manner. But the earnest man is silent, looks calmly at him, and says finally, "Aye, it is possible." Now the learner becomes passionate, resorts to prayers, or, if he is so equipped, to ingenious arguments, aye, perhaps he even insults the earnest man and becomes himself quite bewildered, and everything seems confusion about him; but when with these weapons and in this condition, he stormily intrudes upon the earnest man, he is compelled to endure his calm and unchanged look, and to recover himself in silence, for the earnest man only looks at him and says finally, "Aye, it is possible." So it is with death. Certainty is the unchangeable, and uncertainty is that brief word: "It is possible", and every condition which would make the certainty of death a conditioned certainty for the wishful individual, every agreement which would make the certainty of death a conditioned certainty for the resolved individual, every arrangement which would condition the certainty of death as to the time and hour for the acting individual, every condition, every agreement, every arrangement is stranded upon this word; and all passion and all ingenuity and all defiance becomes impotent before this word, until the learner goes back into himself. But precisely herein lies the earnestness, and it was for that purpose that certainty and uncertainty would help the learner. If the certainty is permitted to stand for what it may be, a general superscription over life, not, as may happen with the help of uncertainty, as the endorse-

ment of application upon the particular and daily event, then earnestness is not learned. The uncertainty approaches and points steadily like a teacher to the subject of instruction, and says to the learner, "Take note of the certainty." Then earnestness comes into being. And no teacher can so effectively compel attention to the subject of instruction as the uncertainty of death when it points to the certainty of death; and no teacher can so keep the thoughts of the pupil concentrated upon the one subject of instruction as the thought of the uncertainty of death when it trains the thought to the certainty of death.

The certainty of death determines the learner once for all in earnestness, but its uncertainty is the daily, or at least the frequent, or at any rate the needful inspection which watches over earnestness: then first do we have earnestness. And no supervision is so painstaking, neither the father's over the child, the teacher's over the pupil, nor even the prison guard's over the prisoner; and there is no supervision so ennobling as the uncertainty of death when it tests the use of time and the character of the deed, that of the resolving individual or of the acting individual, that of the youth or that of the man of advanced age, that of the man or of the woman. For with respect to the good use of time, it is not, in relation to the interruption of death, essential whether the time was long or short; and with respect to an essential activity, in relation to the interruption of death, it is not essential whether it was finished or only begun. In relation to the accidental, the length of time is decisive, as for example, fortune: it is the end which determines whether one has been fortunate. In relation to all accidental outward activities it is essential that the work be finished. But an essential activity is not determined essentially by time and the external

result, in so far as it is death that brings the interruption. And so earnestness comes to consist in living each day as if it were the last, and at the same time the first in a long life; and in choosing an activity which is not dependent upon whether a whole generation is granted to complete it well, or only a brief time to have begun it well.

Finally it must be said about the decisiveness of death, that it is inexplicable. If men perhaps find an explanation: death itself explains nothing. For if you could get your eye upon him, the pale, joyless harvester, leaning upon his scythe, and if you were to approach him, whether in the hope that your weariness of life might win his favor, or your burning longing for the eternal move him, if you were to lay your hand on his shoulder and say, "Explain yourself, if only by a single word," do you believe he would answer? I think he would not even notice that your hand was on his shoulder, and that you spoke to him. Or if death came, ah, so opportunely, ah, as the greatest of benefactors, as a savior, if it came and saved a man from making himself guilty of the sin that is never repented in life because it puts an end to life—if now this unhappy person were to offer his thanks to death for bringing him what he sought and saving him from becoming guilty, do you think that death would understand him? I think he would not hear a word of what he said; for he explains nothing. If he comes as the greatest benefaction or as the greatest misfortune, if he is greeted with acclaim or with desperate opposition, all that death knows nothing about, for it is inexplicable. He is the transition; about the relationship he knows nothing, absolutely nothing.

Now this inexplicability might seem to need an explanation. But therein is the earnestness, that the explana-

tion does not explain death, but reveals the inmost being of him who offers the explanation. Oh, what a serious reminder about deliberation in speech! Even though one must smile when one sees thoughtlessness using his hand to support the brooding head which must get to the bottom of the explanation, and though one must smile again when this thinker comes out with his explanation; or when, as if in answer to a public summons, even the most frivolous of thinkers is ready with a notion in passing, a remark that is supposed to be an explanation, making use of the rare opportunity, that death is for all an inexplicable riddle: alas, the earnest judgment about such a procedure is that the author of the explanation accuses himself, betrays how thoughtless and worthless his life is. For this reason a reserve concerning the explanation is in itself a sign of some earnestness, understanding that precisely because death is nothing, it is not like some remarkable inscription that every passerby must try to read, or like a curiosity which everyone must have seen, and about which everyone must have an opinion. The decisive feature of the explanation, that which prevents death's nothingness from making the explanation a mere nothing, is that it requires retroactive power and reality in the life of the living, so that death becomes a teacher for him, and not one who treasonably assists him to a self-appraisement which makes the explainer out as a fool.

As inexplicable, death might seem to be all and absolutely nothing, and the explanation might seem to consist in saying this in a single statement. Such an explanation reveals a life which, contented with the present, guards itself against the influence of death by means of a mood which holds death fast in the equilibrium of the indecisive. Death does not get power to disturb such a

life, but does have influence, although not retroactive power, to transform the life. This explanation does not oscillate between a variety of moods, but death is each moment transported out of life in that equilibrium of the indecisive, which removes it to a distance. And it was the highest pitch of courage in paganism, when the wise man (whose earnestness was precisely indicated by his refusal to offer an explanation hastily) was able to live so with the thought of death: overcoming this thought each moment in his life by means of the indecisiveness involved in it. The earthly life is thus lived out, the wise man knows that death is there, he does not live in thoughtless forgetfulness of its existence, he meets with it in thought, he makes it impotent in indeterminateness, and this is his victory over death; but death is not permitted to interpenetrate the life so as to transform it.

As the inexplicable, death might seem to be the highest happiness. Such an explanation betrays a life of childishness, and the explanation is, as is the final fruit of childishness—superstition. The author of this explanation had the conception of childhood and youth about the pleasant and the unpleasant, and life went on; he saw himself deceived, became older in years but not in mind; he laid hold of nothing eternal· then the childishness in him concentrated itself into an overstrained conception of death as something that would come and bring everything to fulfillment. Death now became the sought-for friend, the beloved, the rich benefactor who had everything to grant that the childish one had vainly sought to have fulfilled in life. Sometimes this happiness is mentioned frivolously and rashly, sometimes sadly, sometimes the explainer even noisily brings his explanation to market, and proposes to help others; but the explanation only reveals how

the explainer is in his inner life, that he did not sense the retroactivity of earnestness, but childishly hastened forward, childishly pinned his hopes on death, just as he had childishly pinned his hopes on life.

As the inexplicable, death might seem to be the greatest misfortune. But this explanation indicates that the explainer clings to life like a coward, perhaps clings in cowardly fashion to its privileges, perhaps to its suffering, so that he fears life, but fears death still more. Death does not obtain retroactive power, that is, not by virtue of its interpretation, for otherwise it would doubtless work to make for the one the favors of fortune joyless, for the other, the earthly suffering hopeless.

The explanation has also used other interpretative names, it has called death a transition, a transformation, a suffering, a struggle, the last struggle, a punishment, the wages of sin. Each of these explanations contains an entire view of life. Oh, how serious the challenge to the interpreter! It is easy to say all these things by rote, it is easy to explain death when it costs no effort and requires no understanding of what it is all about, namely, that the explanation should find retroactive power in life. Why should anyone wish to transform death into a mockery over himself? For death does not need the explanation, and it certainly has never asked a thinker to help it get one. But the living needs an explanation, and why? In order to live in accordance with it.

If anyone thinks that death is a transformation, this may be quite true, but suppose now that the uncertainty of death, which goes about like a teacher, and every moment looks to see that the pupil is attentive,—suppose that it discovered that the meaning of the interpreter was about as follows: "I have a long life before me, thirty

years, and perhaps forty, and then sometime death will come as a transformation,"—what would the teacher think about such a pupil, who had not even understood the determination of uncertainty that attaches to death? Oh, if anyone believes that there is a transformation that will sometime take place, and the uncertainty of death looks to see and discovers that it is an attitude not unlike that of a gambler who awaits this as an event which will sometime happen,—what would the teacher think about this pupil who had not even noticed that in the decision of death, all is over, and that the transformation cannot be enrolled with other events as a new one of the same kind, because in death there is finality?

It is possible to have an opinion about distant events, about a natural object, about nature, about learned writings, about another man, and about many other things, and when one gives expression to this opinion, the wise man can decide whether it is correct or incorrect. On the other hand no one ever takes the trouble to consider the other side of the truth, whether the one who expresses it really has it, or whether it is not something he recites by rote. And yet this other side is equally important, for not only is he mad who says what is meaningless, but quite as certainly, he who expresses a correct opinion, when this has absolutely no significance for him. One person shows his confidence in another, his appreciation, in accepting it as his opinion, when he says it. Alas, and yet it is so easy, so very easy, to acquire a true opinion; and, alas, it is so difficult, so very difficult, to have an opinion, and to have it in truth. Now since death is the object of earnestness, the earnestness is again in this, that, in relation to death, one should not be overhasty in forming an opinion. The uncertainty of death constantly takes the liberty,

in all earnestness, of looking to see whether the one who professes the opinion really has it, that is, if his life expresses it. In relation to other things, it is possible to express an opinion, and then when one is required to act in the strength of this opinion, that is to show that one has it, innumerable evasions are possible. But the uncertainty of death is the strict examiner of the learner; and when he recites the explanation, the uncertainty says to him, "Well, then, I shall inquire whether this is really your opinion, for now, in this moment, it is over; it is over for you, there is not a thought of evasion, not a single letter to add, so now we shall see whether you really meant what you said about me." Alas, all empty explanations, and all phrase-making, and all word-painting, and all linking together of early explanations to find one still more ingenious, and all admiration therefor, and all the labor therewith: this is all merely a diversion, and distraction in absent-mindedness,—what do you suppose the uncertainty of death thinks about it?

Hence the address will abstain from explanation; as death is the last of all, so shall this be the last thing we say about it: it is inexplicable. The inexplicability is the boundary, and the significance of the utterance is to give the thought of death retroactive power, to make it impulsive in the life, because in the finality of death it is over, and because the uncertainty of death makes an inspection every moment. The inexplicability is therefore not a summons to guess riddles, an invitation to be ingenious, but the earnest admonition of death to the living: "I need no explanation, but do you consider that in this decision everything is over, and that it may at any moment be at hand; see, this is well worth your consideration."

My hearer, perhaps it seems to you that from this address you can learn little; perhaps you know more yourself. And yet it will not have been in vain if in relation to the idea of the decisiveness of death, it has been the occasion for your reminding yourself that knowing too much is not an unconditional good. Perhaps it seems to you that the thought of death has become merely terrifying, and that it also has a gentler, friendlier aspect for contemplation, that the weary laborer longing for rest, the troubled sufferer trusting in death's pain-effacing sleep, the sad need of the victim of misunderstanding for peaceful slumber, each is also a beautiful and legitimate explanation of death. Undeniably! But such an explanation cannot be learned by rote, it cannot be learned by reading about it, it is only slowly acquired, and well acquired only by him who worked himself weary in the service of the good, who wandered himself tired on the right way, who bore anxiety in a righteous cause, who was misunderstood in a noble striving, and only thus well acquired, is it in its proper place, and a legitimate utterance in the mouth of a Right Reverend. But a young man dare not speak thus, lest the beautiful explanation, like the wise word in the mouth of a fool, should in his mouth become untruth And I have indeed heard that the earnest teacher of the child and of the youth, at a later time became the friend of the youth become older and more mature, but I have never heard, at least not from anyone from whom I could wish to learn, that the beginning was made by the teacher becoming a playmate of the child, or the child an oldster, nor that this relation of friendship was indeed thus inaugurated. So also with the thought of death. If it has not sometime given pause to the life of the youth, and with terror, and only used the earnestness to hold the

fear in bounds; if the uncertainty of death has never had its period of instruction, where it disciplined him with earnest severity: then I have never heard, at least not from anyone in whose knowledge I could wish to have lot or share, I have never heard from such a one, that in that case it was true if he called death a friend, since he had never had him for more than a playmate; when even in youth, weary of life, deceptively, in order to cheat himself, he talked about his friendship with death; when without having utilized life, as an old man, deceptively, in order to deceive himself, he talked about his friendship with death.

The man who has here spoken is young, still in the age of a learner, he understands merely the difficulty and the severity of the instruction, and may he succeed in doing this so that the time may come when he will venture to rejoice in the friendship of the teacher.—He who has spoken here is not your teacher, my hearer, he merely permits you, as he permits himself, to witness how a man seeks to learn something from the thought of death, this master in the art of teaching earnestness, given at birth to each man to be his teacher for the whole of life, and who by reason of the uncertainty, is always ready to begin the instruction when it is required. For death does not come because anyone calls upon him (it was only a jest that the weaker might thus command the stronger), but as soon as anyone opens the door for the uncertainty, then the teacher is there. The teacher who will sometime come to test and examine the disciple to see whether he has willed to use the instruction or not. And this test to which death subjects the pupil, or to use a foreign word to signify the same, this final examination of life, is equally difficult for all. It is not here as elsewhere that the happily

gifted individual finds it easy to meet the test, the less talented, more difficult; no, death fits the test to the ability, oh, so exactly, and the test becomes equally difficult for all, because it is the test of earnestness

INDEX

Confessional, place of prayer, 5, 9; what confession is, 30, sincerity required, 37

Death, not the only barrier to achievement, 54, 55, 56, decisiveness of, 75, 82, 84, 85, 87; inexplicable, 107-112, its earnestness, 78; teacher of earnestness, 81, thought of, a jest if not earnest, 78; unchanged, 85; a sleep, 88, indeterminable, 93; equality of, 93-94; indeterminate in equality and inequality, 100, general contemplation confusing, 104, certainty and uncertainty, 104-106

Earnestness, required in marriage, 62; how learned, 64, 65, internal, 66, 79, appropriation of experience, 79, not confused with busyness, 79, difference between mood and, 80, 90, 91-92, gives energy for living, 90-91, reconciled to life, 97; understands equality of death, 97-98, consists in, 106, test of earnestness, 114

Fear and Trembling, condition of soul, 24, untrue, 25

Forgiveness, of others, 5, 8, of oneself, 5, 6

God, seeing and knowing, 9, highest good, 13, omnipresence, 20, proving existence of, 21, makes insignificant significant, 84, equality before, 99-100

Grave, no remembrance, 75, 77

Happiness, a task, 69, should be earnest, 71, needs resolution, 71

Knowledge, presupposition, 17, 18, deception of, 35; application of, 36

Life, duty to, 92, kind of, determinative, 92, failure in, 96, false alleviation, 87

Love, mysterious, 43, conquers all, 47, 49, 51, 52, 61, 67, 70, a resolution, 67, abides, 67

Marriage, earnest, 45, 46, 61, 62, no distinction before God, 47-48; cause of difficulties in, 63, 64; requires conception of God and of oneself, 68, 69

Mood, distinct from earnestness, 81, 87, 88, 95, 102

Prayer, true, expressed in words, 10

Primitiveness, 38

Procrastination, enemy of death, 86

Repentance, difficult, 34

Resolution, 44, 49; must have conception of danger, 52; requires conception of life and oneself, 55; prevents disappointment, 58, 59; requires earnestness, 66; worthy, 69, thankful, 70, needed in trouble, 72, 73, eternal soundness, 74

Seeker, has a promise, 1; looks toward God, 16; object of search, within, 19, omnipresence of God, 20, changed, 24

Self-Examination, difficult, 29

Self-knowledge, taught by thought of death, 99

Sin, knowledge of, 24, impurity, 25, 26, not a generality, 27; magnitude of, 29, continuity, 33; religious debauch, 34

Sincerity, duty of, 31; difficulty, 33, *in the confessional*, 37

Sinner, conviction of being, 28; not by comparison with others, 29

Sorrow, beginning of seeking God, 26, increases consciousness of sin, 27

Stillness, place of, 2, 3, 39, conscience exists in, 4, submerges differences, 7, instills sense of guilt, 8; not external, 10, 11, 12, danger in, 11, becoming still, 38, diversions of, 39, not self-acquired, 40, sense of guilt, in, 41

Striving, infinite, 16

Struggle, differences in, 52, 53, requires enthusiasm, 53, 54

Superstition, 109

Truth, 38, understood by the simple, 41

Wishing, relation to wonder, 13

Woman who was a sinner, 35

Wonder, consciousness of God, 13, 22, defined, 14, second wonder, 19, 22, individual, 22, 23

Worship, mingled emotions, 13, expression of wonder, 13, 14, 16, true, 30

Youth, qualities, 15-16